Archaeology and Classical Humanities Volume 1

Acheloios, Thales, and the Origin of Philosophy

A Response to the Neo-Marxians

Nicholas J. Molinari

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Archaeology and Classical Humanities

Volume 1

Recent trends in the disciplines of both archaeology and classics indicate that, while there are many ways to approach antiquity, perhaps the most enlightening accounts utilize various complementary methodological approaches. The Archaeopress Archaeology and Classical Humanities Series is a new interdisciplinary list aimed specifically at promoting such advanced scholarship of antiquity that integrates a wide range of perspectives in reinterpreting the past. The underlying criteria for books included in the list is that they either use archaeological evidence to shed a new light on topics in classical humanities, or, use classical literature to help illuminate the study of material culture. Archaeologists, classicists, and all other students of antiquity will find a home in this list that has been created with the specific intention of fostering a spirit of mutual collaboration and encouraging an interdisciplinary approach to the topics of antiquity that we all love.

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Nicholas J. Molinari, KHS

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To Thales, the original Acheloios fanatic

'.....maybe this isn't the right way of making exchanges for virtue, by exchanging pleasures for pleasures and pains for pains and terror for terror and the greater for the less, as if they were coins, but maybe this alone is the right coin for virtue, the coin for which all things must be exchanged—thoughtfulness. Maybe this is the genuine coin for which and with which all things must be bought and sold'

-Socrates[1]

[1] Plato, *Phaedo* 69a, trans. Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem, *Plato's Phaedo* (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 1998).

Abstract

This book presents a new account of Thales based on the idea that Acheloios, a deity equated with water in the ancient Greek world and found in Miletos during Thales' life, was the most important cultic deity influencing the thinker, profoundly shaping his philosophical worldview. In doing so, it also weighs in on the metaphysical and epistemological dichotomy that seemingly underlies all academia—the antithesis of the methodological postulate of Marxian dialectical materialism vis-à-vis the Platonic idea of fundamentally real transcendental forms. Unbeknownst to many scholars, there are various Neo-Marxian thinkers that position the origin of coinage as the pivotal technological development giving rise to impersonal "metaphysical cosmology," suggesting that the value of money was more-or-less projected back onto the cosmos in the form of "ideal substances." While the arguments are incredibly sophisticated and persuasive, their conclusions (either stated or implied) are rather difficult to swallow: the self is merely an illusion, abstract ideas of an ultimate source of value, like God or the Good, are totally delusional (as is the soul, and presumably any notion of inherent human dignity), and essentially everything is reducible to mankind's enslavement to commodities and the notion of our own objectified labor, which is the true source of all value according to Marx. Not only is this an alarming belief that many scholars (consciously or unconsciously) have adopted, since essentially any action could be "justified," it is also demonstrably false, since it rests on a misunderstanding of Thales and misconception of philosophy as such.

My work rectifies that misunderstanding. In an important sense, it is an attempt at redefining philosophy as a "love of wisdom," which I argue was accurate even in the Presocratic setting, and it uses the influence of Acheloios on Thales to do so. Throughout its pages I explore the etymology and historical uses of the word *ὕδωρ*, examine the archaeological context of 7th to 6th century Miletos, consider various aquatic myths Thales encountered, and highlight a hitherto overlooked tradition stemming from Thales and influencing such thinkers as Pythagoras, Empedokles, and Hippo, which culminates in a completely new reading of Plato's *Phaedrus*, a dialogue in which Plato responds to the exact type of thinking employed by the Neo-Marxians. It is there that we find Socrates and Phaedrus surrounded by the iconography of Acheloios and the nymphs, all while they lie reclined like river gods (the sinews of Acheloios) on the banks of the Ilisos. And it is in that dialogue that Plato defines philosophy as a love of wisdom—the beholding of a multiplicity of hermeneutical frameworks—and alludes to the fact that it began with the sacrifice of Acheloios, the initial philosophical maneuver which he attributes to Thales. The book ends with a threefold rejoinder to the Neo-Marxian school, corresponding to the *λόγος*, *μῦθος*, and *ἔργον* of Acheloios. It turns out that, (1) the *λόγος* of Acheloios contained the ideal preconditions conducive to an abstraction to a more refined philosophical worldview in which divine water operated as the One among the Many; (2) the *μῦθος* of Acheloios actually encouraged the application of the notion of sacrifice to Acheloios himself (thus revealing his essence as divine water); and, (3), the *ἔργον* of Acheloios, in which he kneels in assent to sacrifice, is found on a coin that was probably designed by Thales. In the final analysis, I suggest that the tradition of Acheloios is reflective of a greater philosophical truth, and that by following Thales' lead, we transcend the Marxian hermeneutic of doubt and reorient ourselves toward the *οὐσια ὄντως οὖσα*.

Introduction

'For if this book is a joke, it is a joke against me. I am the man who, with utmost daring, discovered what had been discovered before.'

-G.K. Chesterton[1]

Arguments concerning the ultimate principles of reality tend to assume remarkable forms at different times throughout history. In one peculiar case some have maintained that all philosophical speculation has its origin in coins. Plato's colorless, formless, and intangible Being (*οὐσια ὄντως οὖσα*), St. Thomas Aquinas' *quod sit per se necessarium*, Kant's synthetic *a priori*—all of it originates from stamped little globules of metal with specific markings. Indeed, many of the adherents to this theory consider such ideologies entirely delusional, and believe that universal forms and values emerging from abstraction are complete fabrications on the part of man, with no independent ontological status. Fairly recently, the basic argument that coins caused philosophy was given tremendous force, specifically in Richard Seaford's *Money and the Early Greek Mind*. Seaford's argument, as compelling as it is, is an exercise in strict historical materialism, and the result of his investigation radically reduces the character of Presocratic philosophy to the confines of 'metaphysical cosmology.' While it might seem, on face value, that this topic would be of little interest to any but a small group of academics, in truth it is one of the most important philosophical discussions of our time (and all time). In fact, as I'll venture to show, the question of Thales and the origin of philosophy is part of a conversation started by Plato thousands of years ago, one in which he was responding to the very same type of thinking employed by the Neo-Marxians. There, he offered a response to such thinking in a shrine to Acheloios on the banks of a river, and likewise, my response to the Neo-Marxians will also have recourse to Acheloios, for, as I hope to show, Acheloios is fundamentally important to the history of philosophical activity, then and now.

Accordingly, the purpose of my work here is essentially twofold: on the one hand, I plan to refute the Neo-Marxian account of the origin of philosophy, an account which is rooted in the dialectical materialism of Marx himself. I believe refuting the Neo-Marxian claim is incredibly important because the ramifications of accepting such a viewpoint are the elimination of God and the soul, which are defended in this work in a variety of ways. On the other hand, the refutation of the Neo-Marxian account will consist in establishing the undeniable relation of the cult of Acheloios and its surrounding mythos to the philosophy of Thales. This latter demonstration is equally important because, so far as I can anticipate, it will help initiate a new type of philosophy that emerges in the face of the critical methodology and its underlying hermeneutic of doubt.

Such bold claims demand lots of evidence and such an ambitious work requires a thorough introduction, so I have decided at the outset to provide an overview of the argument in its entirety, found below. This should help the reader get his or her bearings before evaluating the evidence in the text, but should by no means be seen as covering all aspects of the argument. I have also opted for Greek fonts. The alternative would be to use transliterations,

[1] G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: John Lane Company, 1909), 18.

but if the reader has no knowledge of Greek, I see no legitimate reason—I do, however, list the transliteration after the first appearance of all Greek words that appear regularly throughout the work. Additionally, although there are many footnotes throughout the manuscript, for the vast majority they do not provide any additional rationale—the reader is therefore welcome to skip over them for a smoother reading though should he or she want to see the evidence, it is *all* there, along with what I think are interesting anecdotes. Finally, this book is an inference to the best explanation and should ideally be read from start to finish in its entirety (a courtesy I admittedly was unable to extend to all of the books I relied so heavily on). I'd like to warn in particular about skipping directly to Chapters 9-12 without examining the many pages of evidence that precede them, particularly the account of Thales' philosophy in Chapter 3 and the overview of Acheloios in Chapter 4.

In terms of the book's contents, the first chapter begins with an analysis of abstraction and resultant ideologies according to Marx. Marx proposed a theory in *Das Kapital* that the exchange-value of commodities, specifically abstract human labor, gave rise to all ideologies. However, he insisted that such ideologies were essentially like 'optical illusions' that did not correspond to some objective reality outside the mind, hence many refer to Marx's enterprise under the banner of dialectical or historical materialism, considering it the rigorous employment of a methodological postulate rather than a proper 'worldview.' As a critical theory, dialectical materialism explains the superstructures of social reality and their material underpinnings in processes of (and struggles to control) production and consumption; but it also has an ontographic dimension, despite the fact that Marx does not participate in bourgeois philosophy. In this second sense, dialectical materialism implies, ontologically, that all reality is reduced to dialectical exchange in a thoroughly immanent, material world (the opposite of Hegel), and these ontological parameters have serious implications insofar as all transcendental forms and values are essentially non-existent. Indeed, even consciousness—the static, persistent individual experiencing the world through time—is itself delusory. Thus, all reality, having no fundamental, permanent parameters, is reduced to flux and probability (Plato's 'becoming'), however well we may be able to anticipate or explain behaviors using the methodological postulate.

Upon this basis there are two early theories that argue the social use of coinage literally caused philosophy. These theories are found in the work of George Thomson and Alfred Sohn-Rethel. On the one hand, Thompson offers an important cultural critique of archaic coinage and Presocratic philosophy, and shines a light on the often-overlooked fact that philosophy and coinage emerged in nearly the same place at the same time. That is, electrum coinage, the very first true coinage of the world, appears in the second half of the seventh century BC in the area of Ionia and Lydia, in the same half century that Thales was born, thus a generation or so before he began philosophizing. Thomson argues, largely following Marx, that the social exchange of money engendered abstract philosophical frameworks in the sense that the value of money was reflected back onto the world via a 'false consciousness,' and his historical survey is evidence of such a causal relation. But Thomson's theory lacked sufficient discussion of the inner workings or machinations that take place in the mind during the process in which exchange value undergoes some metamorphosis into something else. This ambiguity was somewhat clarified by Alfred Sohn-Rethel, sworn enemy of the looming technological takeover of mankind, who presented an abstract critique of epistemology in his discussion of how exchange-abstraction gives rise to philosophical frameworks, juxtaposing his view with

Kant's system of Transcendental Idealism. For Sohn-Rethel, instead of the mind projecting *a priori* categories onto the world, social interactions in the world (specifically, the exchange of coined money) change the physical brain in such a way that it can then project universal frameworks and values onto the world.

The second chapter of this book examines Richard Seaford's works, which combine and expand upon the theories of Marx, Thomson, and Sohn-Rethel. Seaford argues, following his predecessors, that the absence of use-value in money makes it an 'ideal substance,' and this notion of ideal substance is then projected onto the cosmos by the Presocratics in their identification of various material candidates for the *ἀρχή* (*archḗ*). For evidence, Seaford presents a tenfold scheme in which he compares coined money to Anaximander's *ἄπειρον* (*ápeiron*). Briefly, he argues that both coinage and the *ἄπειρον* exhibit ten common characteristics, and such a parallel supports the idea that coinage engendered philosophical activity, which Seaford defines as 'metaphysical cosmology' consisting of 'abstract ideas of the universe as an impersonal system.' On top of this, in his later works, Seaford goes so far as to explain the perceived unity of individual human consciousness as also deriving from coinage, solidifying him among the rank and file of the Neo-Marxians. Here he argues that the abstract impersonal substance encompassed in money is 'introjected' into the mind, essentially producing the 'false consciousness' advocated by Marx and his followers.

With this background, the first step in disputing what I call the Neo-Marxian school of exchange-abstraction is to point out some of its apparent shortcomings, which I do in the second part of Chapter 2. Here I begin by building upon a poignant critique of Seaford by Joshua Reynolds. He points out three things: (1) Seaford is not explaining the conscious thoughts of the Presocratics and focusing only on unconscious motivators; (2) There is an abundance of evidence that exhibits a pre-coinage distinction of sign and substance; and (3) Seaford's account does not explain the actual cognitive processes at play in the origin of philosophy. But Reynolds' critique is no nail in the coffin, and Seaford's argument still has incredible strength. I therefore add additional critiques which I build upon throughout the remainder of the book. Notably, I point out that Seaford's argument is based too heavily on the Aristotelian tradition (specifically as interpreted since Hegel), which many scholars have criticized because it employs anachronistic terminology when discussing archaic thinkers. But an even more serious issue with Seaford's account, and likewise Thomson's and Sohn-Rethel's, is that they all almost completely ignore Thales. The rationale is that he is so obscure and the evidence so fragmentary that we cannot determine much. Conveniently, by ignoring Thales it allows the argument for exchange-abstraction to gain a much stronger foothold, since the ambiguity (or even mysticism) surrounding Thales is such that it is incommensurable with the precision of the exchange-abstraction paradigm. Moreover, by ignoring Thales the very definition of philosophy changes and begins with Anaximander's (seemingly) far more delineated *ἄπειρον*. In the course of this book, I hope to show that philosophy is something other than what Seaford makes it out to be; that is to say, it is not simply the projection of 'abstract ideas of the universe as an impersonal system,' but, rather, an authentic *love* of wisdom that stems from beatific vision.

Having identified the core problems, I begin the investigation into an alternative that reestablishes Thales as the original philosopher, properly understood. Thus, I turn to Thales and Acheloios quite generally in the next two chapters. In Chapter 3 I review the ancient

accounts of Thales' philosophy we can rely on for the larger project, and in this case we will see that it amounts to just three things: (1) *ὕδωρ* (*hýdōr*) is the *ἀρχή;* (2) the Earth rests on *ὕδωρ;* and (3) all things are full of gods. All other elements of his philosophy are far too uncertain to depend upon at this initial stage and will not be given any attention here—not because they are completely out of the realm of possibility, but because an accurate assessment of them would prove far too demanding here, and will be much easier to interpret after an examination of the Acheloios tradition. In any case, in this chapter we will see that it is erroneous to think that Thales believed water was the constitutive cause of all things, and also that *ἀρχή* likely meant more than simply 'origin.' Herein I'll suggest that Thales viewed *ὕδωρ* as divine water and, metaphysically, this can best be construed in a threefold sense distinct from the traditional Aristotelian conception, as the originating, underlying/governing, and final principle of all things.

In Chapter 4, I present an overview of Acheloios, based largely on my earlier work with Dr. Sisci. Here we will see that Acheloios emerges from a widespread Orientalizing phenomenon in which itinerant mercenaries and seers collectively crystallized the mythos of Acheloios and formed a cultural *koine* spanning much of the Mediterranean, which is reflected in literature as early as Homer. All of these practices and related mythologies were largely filtered through earlier Near Eastern predecessors. Most importantly, Acheloios was equated with water and viewed in some important accounts as its ultimate source. This point, which has been overlooked in all discourses on Thales until now, is utterly essential. If Thales said that (divine) water was the *ἀρχή*, regardless of the ontological dimension of his conception of *ἀρχή*, surely a deity equated with water is relevant to a discussion of the mythological and religious influences on Thales. And this equating of Acheloios and water is not cherry-picked from one or two obscure passages examined in isolation, but rather comes from a robust, widely-held belief system exhibited in literature and cult. I follow the work of contemporary archaeologist and classicist Dr. Hans-Peter Isler, who expanded greatly upon the original theory of Nicola Ignarra (a remarkably brilliant, 18th century scholar). The major ancient sources for this tradition are the earlier versions of Homer's *Iliad* (advocated by both Megakleides and Zenodotus), fragments of Ephorus, the works of Euripides, Achaeus, Sophokles, and Aristophanes, the *Derveni Papyrus*, the *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus*, Virgil, Servius, and Macrobius. Ultimately, Acheloios was widely viewed as the ultimate source and strength of water and the rivers of the world were seen as the 'sinews of Acheloios' —both meanings, strength and sinews, contained in the Greek *ἴς* (*ís*) (a word we find paired with Acheloios in antiquity).

With these basic parameters set—an assessment and initial critique of the Neo-Marxians and a basic overview of both Thales and Acheloios—the real work of the book begins, namely, demonstrating that Thales was influenced by the cult of Acheloios and its surrounding mythos. In Chapter 5, I begin to forge the Acheloios-Thales connection by first examining the very word Thales used to identify the *ἀρχή*, namely, *ὕδωρ*. Here I look at its use in Homeric times and, as it turns out, it always refers to fresh water unless employing a very specific epithet (and then only in the *Odyssey* and very rarely). This is our first indication that we need to look beyond Okeanos in assessing the mythological and religious influences on Thales. In fact, it bodes well for Acheloios, who is often identified with fresh water in particular. I then turn to the etymology of *ὕδωρ*, specifically its roots in the Akkadian *edû* and *adû* and its distant cousin, the Sanskrit *udan.* In all cases we find consistency with the Greek: the Akkadian and Sanskrit

equivalents of *ὕδωρ* also mean fresh, or pure, unadulterated water—water as such—and there is also invariably some divine or sacred dimension to it.

Chapter 6 examines the archaeological evidence demonstrating that the cult of Acheloios was actually in Miletos during Thales' life. The first objective was to determine when Thales lived. This was not easy, because what evidence there is, is mostly unreliable. Still, we can be certain that he was born in the second half of the seventh century and died in the second half of the sixth century, and those general parameters are sufficient for our purposes. Moving on from Thales' dates, I exhibit several pieces of material culture that demonstrate Acheloios was known to the Milesians during Thales' life: a unique electrum stater featuring Acheloios Meandros as a winged man-faced bull, three small electrum fractionals also featuring Acheloios, two pottery fragments excavated at Berezan, a Milesian colony, both featuring Acheloios, and several aryballoi in the form of the head of Acheloios from Naukratis, another Milesian colony.

Having established, beyond reasonable doubt, that the cult of Acheloios was operative in Miletos during Thales' life, I move in Chapter 7 to a more philosophical argument that Thales must have transitioned from a more mythological and religious mindset to a philosophical mindset, else he could not be credited with establishing anything new. Here I focus mostly on critiquing the work of Patricia O'Grady, who wrote a monograph on Thales, and who insists that Thales was not influenced by myth at all. First, I point out some obvious (and serious) shortcomings in her work: (1) a conflation of myth and religion; (2) a complete lack of research into the culture of seventh to sixth century Miletos; and (3) an unjustified overextension of some fragments of Xenophanes and Heraclitus. I then provide a philosophical argument, largely following Francis Cornford, that insists philosophy could not emerge *ex nihilo* in the manner O'Grady describes, but must have developed analogously from myth and religion. Theories like those of Cornford have diminished in influence since the mid-20th century because they assumed too much about the internal machinations of the thinker. But now we have proof of Acheloios in Miletos, providing the nourishment for fresh, fruitful speculations about mythological and cultic influence on philosophy. I end the section by reviewing the major developmental theme of the origin of philosophy promoted by Herman Diels and instituted by Walter Kranz, and followed by many others. With this developmental scheme in mind, it is clear that the problem question confronting Thales was not, 'What is that from which all things originate, all things consist, and all things return?' (O'Grady's Aristotle), nor Panchenko's reduced version borrowed from Anaximander, which amounts to something like, 'What is that from which all things originate and to which all things return?' I say this because such questions were already answered by myth and religion—perhaps not perfectly articulated, but enough so that the theory could be formulated that *ὕδωρ* was the *ἀρχή*, without a clear, delineated abstract question concerning *ἀρχή* in search of a candidate.

With this philosophical point put aside, I then turn to an examination of other possible mythological and religious influences on Thales that might have helped give rise to philosophy proper. First and most obvious is Okeanos, whom many others, apparently since Hippias, have suggested might have had an influence on Thales. First, however, I discredit that he (Okeanos) was the primary influence based on the following: The two lines in Homer from Book 14 concerning Okeanos probably refer to river gods and might indeed be later interpolations, since the evidence presented by D'Alessio concerning Book 21 is so convincing, and Book 14 is well known for its internal inconsistencies. I support the 'orthodox' view of Acheloios,

again following D'Alessio, with the authority of Megakleides, the pre-Alexandrian scholar, and Zenodotus, a former librarian at the Library of Alexander, both of whom were ethnic Ionians that advocated Acheloios was the original source of all water. Overall, I insist that there is no strong evidence that Okeanos was worshipped or even known about in seventh- to mid sixth-century BC Miletos, so it is impossible to say he definitely influenced the thinker. Nonetheless, there is some evidence of a conflation between Okeanos and Acheloios that appears after Thales, and since we know Okeanos was attested in Attica c. 590 BC, I do not dismiss the possibility of influence entirely.

Following these observations, I look east, largely following W.K.C. Guthrie and M.L.West, and examine Apsu and Asalúhi in the Near East and Nūn in Egypt. These figures show remarkable similarity to the idea that divine water is the 'origin,' or *ἀρχή* as traditionally construed in Homeric epic, insofar as they operate as the primordial water from which all things emerge. I then examine Yahweh, who also has a distinct aquatic dimension and who, like Acheloios, was probably represented in art as a man-faced bull up to the sixth century BC Finally, I'll look at two Milesian figures: Aphrodite (*Aphrogeneia*), worshipped there and at other Milesian colonies as a sea goddess, and Poseidon, who had an early cult in Miletos. Combined, these two figures provide an interesting example of a multiplicity of deities in the same area all sharing an underlying aquatic dimension, seemingly indicative of Thales' historically consistent use of the term 'gods' in reference to water, which was likely influenced by earlier Dodonaean practices. Altogether, these similar aquatic deities indicate that Thales was confronted with various (sometimes competing) myths as he developed as a thinker and particularly as he traveled (a point recognized by von Fritz and Popper), and thus the problem question he faced was a question concerning the underlying unity or truth behind these myths—a vindication of myth by a pious sage, in other words, not an abandonment or rejection of sacred traditions. Thus, as I'll demonstrate, Thales seems to have transitioned from the particular watery myths to the general *ὕδωρ*, and I show in the next chapter that this happened through Acheloios.

I therefore offer an essential component to the overall argument in Chapter 9, that Acheloios was the primary and most influential deity on Thales, for a variety of reasons. Here, I will present a more robust picture of Acheloios and expand on some of the details that were summarized in Chapter 4. Briefly, I will demonstrate that the 'modified' (or qualified threefold) Aristotelian *ἀρχή* was presaged (or tacitly expressed) by Acheloios. First, I will exhibit the evidence of Acheloios as a shapeshifter, able to become anything, and also a deity pivotal in sustaining life, instrumental in birth, and essential to the emergence of personal and civic identity, all of which indicate Acheloios was an 'originating' deity in antiquity. Next, we will examine the importance of the cultic belief in assimilation with Acheloios and how this is indicative of the later *ἀρχή* as 'governing' principle. Furthermore, in this section we will look at the positioning of Acheloios as the ultimate, chthonic source of water, and how this characteristic tacitly expresses the later notion of water as underlying principle. Finally, we will look at Acheloios as a psychopomp and his role in death rituals, and here I will demonstrate that he was rather widely and very openly associated with death, hence 'that to which all things return' was tacitly incorporated into his overall mythos. The second part of this chapter looks at the notion of the One among the Many in relation to the idea that the rivers of the world are the sinews of Acheloios, and that he is their underlying strength. Here the double meaning of *ἴς* as both strength and sinew is reflected in the notion of *ἀρχή* as One among the Many. This section will also entertain arguments concerning the abstraction inherent in

the iconic identification of Acheloios as a man-faced bull, in which case I'll point out that recognition of the man-faced bull as a local embodiment of Acheloios requires a process of abstraction conducive to philosophical activity. Combined, all these aspects of the Acheloios tradition appear to have provided the groundwork for Thales to develop a more delineated notion of a nominally demythologized principle of all things analogously from the Acheloios tradition.

At this point in the book, the question naturally arises: If the cult of Acheloios was so influential on Thales, why hasn't anybody noticed this until now? The answer is actually quite simple, and there is compelling evidence of a chain of connection from Thales to Plato, wherein we find an all-encompassing presentation of Thales' philosophy specifically in relation to the cult of Acheloios (and nature and man quite generally). But before getting to Plato, I exhibit the traces of the Acheloian-Thaletan tradition in subsequent thinkers leading up to the Platonic dialogues.

Chapter 10 therefore consists of an examination of Pythagoras, Hippo, and Empedokles, who I will argue were part of a single, largely overlooked tradition that was ultimately filtered through Thales. In Part I, I provide the evidence for the claim that Pythagoras was a highly regarded pupil of Thales and seemingly instrumental in spreading elements of the cult of Acheloios throughout Magna Graecia and Sicily. In Part II, I exhibit evidence that Hippo went so far as to advocate an aquatic soul, and this has been compared, however loosely, to Thales' theory ever since Aristotle's commentary. In Part III, I will review evidence from my earlier work that ties Acheloios to Empedokles which, when combined with the well-attested association of Empedokles and Pythagoras, is indicative of a tradition that stems from Thales. Ultimately, once the Thales-Acheloios connection is made, all of these fragmentary pieces of evidence begin to fall into place, and will be significantly reinforced when we examine the treatment of Thales by Plato.

In Chapter 11, I examine Sophokles, and offer a detailed explanation of some key components to the *Trachiniae* that shed light on the ancient belief concerning the role of assimilation with Acheloios and the notion of purification as it relates to Herakles' apotheosis. Although Sophokles does not mention Thales, there are many important insights into the myth of Acheloios, in particular Sophokles' beautiful illustration of the general Orphic concerns with the individual soul in relation to the divine, here using Herakles as the paradigmatic example. In terms of specifics, after providing an overview of the play, I will exhibit the many allusions to Acheloios beyond the battle in the opening stanzas, viz., open transgressions against Acheloios and Kypris, repeated mention of Dodona (where patrons were to sacrifice to Acheloios), specific recognition of Locri, where Acheloios was worshipped as a psychopomp, among many others. The underlying theme emerging from this analysis is that Herakles' apotheosis is achieved only through assimilation with Acheloios, who occupies a position as 'the only god on earth' that operates in this liminal capacity. In the final analysis, Sophokles is clearly playing upon a previously unwritten ancient tradition with roots in Orphic and Dodonaean customs and one that Thales was certainly aware of (as will be evident in the coverage of Plato).

I therefore end the overview of the ancient Thaletan-Acheloian tradition with Plato's *Phaedrus*, in which Acheloios is positioned as the very foundation for an understanding of colorless, formless, and intangible Being (*οὐσια ὄντως οὖσα*). In other words, Plato captures in the

dialogue the idea that it is through the sacrifice of Acheloios that we are given a glimpse of the transcendent realm of the forms. Rather remarkably, the dialogue itself takes place in a shrine to Acheloios, in which the two interlocutors, much like the sinews of Acheloios, sit reclined like river gods discussing the role of love and beauty in the process of abstraction. I divide the chapter into two parts, the first with allusions to Acheloios, where the setting (a microcosm of Dodona), the discussion of abstraction, the notion of assimilation, the employment of aquatic language, the references to Sirens, Nymphs, and Dodona, and finally the 'banquet of the gods,' are all indicative of Acheloios. Complementing this section, I will present various important pieces of contemporaneous art from the region (mostly Attica itself) that reinforce my interpretation of the dialogue. The second part of the chapter concerns allusions to Thales. Here we see that the conflation of self-knowledge and *ἀρχή*, the notion that 'all things are full of gods,' the relation of motion to the soul, the inferior position of written documents, and the differentiation between wisdom and love of wisdom are without a doubt allusion to Thales. I will support this position with recourse to some of Plato's other works in which he mentions Thales outright in the same context. Finally, the chapter ends with a short section on the positioning of Acheloios vis-à-vis Being and how this juxtaposition is Plato's recognition of the moist seed of dualism in Thales' philosophy. (This will be particularly important in transcending the confines of the Neo-Marxian school).

The conclusion of the book offers the direct confrontation with the Marxian enterprise of dialectical materialism, which turns out to be the exact type of thinking Plato rallied against in writing his dialogues, also making use of the Acheloios tradition. The confrontation is essentially threefold, corresponding to three different elements of the Acheloios tradition that influenced Thales: the *λόγος* (*lógos*) of Acheloios, the *μῦθος* (*mŷthos*) of Acheloios, and the *ἔργον* (*érgon*) of Acheloios. The reason for presenting a threefold explanation is straightforward: since the Marxians will not engage in a philosophical argument, we must meet them at their level and present historical and archaeological evidence (i.e. evidence of the *ἔργον* of Acheloios). However, since we are interested in both the influences on Thales and the ideas he actually held, we must also have a more philosophical account (corresponding to *λόγος*). The mythological account, following Plato's use of myth in the *Phaedrus*, binds the two approaches together and reveals truths inaccessible to the other two individually.

In terms of the *λόγος* of Acheloios, I discuss how the abstraction concerning *ἴς* in relation to Acheloios and his sinews combined with the abstraction inherent in assigning or recognizing the locative epithets of Acheloios are much better suited to explain the impetus behind Thales' philosophical activity when compared to the Neo-Marxian notion of exchange-abstraction. This, to me, should be rather obvious at this stage, especially since Acheloios' *mythos* and cultic practices always involve water, the basis of Thales' entire philosophical enterprise. Why explain the origin of philosophy via unconscious social influences when we have evidence of a myth Thales knew and could consciously extrapolate from?

The discussion of the *μῦθος* of Acheloios concerns the particular insight into the sacrifice of Acheloios as marking the origin of the philosophical experience. Here I argue that the notion of expiatory sacrifice inherent in the myth was particularly influential on Thales. Thales recognized a twofold meaning in the *μῦθος* of Acheloios, as exhibited especially in Plato's treatment of the philosopher and related contemporaneous art. On the one hand, Thales saw that taming rivers (physically regulating the flow of rivers) will produce great agricultural

Figure 1a: Electrum stater (the 'Badge of Thales'). Image courtesy of Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, background edited by author. Inv. Gulbenkian 720.

Figure 1b: Obverse enlargement of the 'Badge of Thales.' Image courtesy of Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, background edited by author. Inv. Gulbenkian 720.

abundance, hence the cornucopia overflows with crops (the standard interpretation of the myth). On the other hand, he saw that, by struggling with the water-bull deity one also gains access to ultimate knowledge—participating in the banquet of the gods. The two-fold meaning of the myth therefore corresponds to physical and intellectual pursuits, respectively. Thales' real genius moment was that he applied the lesson of the myths to Acheloios himself, and the result, the sacrifice of Acheloios, brought forth *ὕδωρ* as qualified threefold *ἀρχή*—the governing origin of all things (hence a metaphysical cosmology). Thus, Thales indeed discovered a nominally demythologized way of explaining the world through the sacrifice of Acheloios. However, by saying *ὕδωρ* is the *ἀρχή* Thales also recapitulated Acheloios and likewise the deeply held religious beliefs of various seventh to sixth century Mediterranean cultures. Essentially, everyone's religious beliefs in an originating, primordial, divine water were correct in Thales' new formulation, and not in some delusional way but in a way all could agree to since divine water was the common ground (though it was given different names and narratives in different areas). Thus, the two formulations, *ὕδωρ* is *ἀρχή* and Acheloios is *ἀρχή*, are certainly not contradictory but more tautological, and Thales therefore moved from the particular watery deities to the more general *ὕδωρ* through the sacrifice of Acheloios. It was therefore recognition of this—the beauty of the sacrifice of Acheloios—that allowed for a beholding of a multiplicity of hermeneutical frameworks that is at the heart of an authentic love of wisdom.

The *ἔργον* of Acheloios is the final component of the Acheloios tradition to consider. Here I will present evidence that Thales' very insight concerning the sacrifice of Acheloios is captured on a coin that was, I'll argue, probably designed by Thales himself—the Badge of Thales (Figure 1a and Figure 1b). In this section I advocate for the often-held position that electrum types featuring various iconic 'blazons' were the marks of officials, prominent citizens, or other elites, and there is no better person to create this coin than Thales (assuming one accepts my assessment thus far). Thales was the most widely-hailed citizen of Miletos—the crowning jewel of the ornament of Ionia—who regularly engaged in regional politics, traveled abroad, and seemingly also made major financial purchases. He is probably even buried beneath the agora of Miletos. And, if he was indeed the first to recognize the intellectual dimension to the Acheloios myth and apply the notion of sacrifice to Acheloios himself, it makes terrific sense that he was behind the design. The coin features a winged Acheloios kneeling in assent to being sacrificed, an iconic representation that would be exhibited throughout the Greek world for hundreds of years to come. Because the winged man-faced bull is the iconic equivalent of divine water (whereas wings symbolize divinity and the man-faced bull, water), all the elements of the origin of philosophy appear on the obverse of this extraordinary coin: Acheloios Meandros as a winged man-faced bull kneeling in assent to being sacrificed, thus exhibiting his essence as *ὕδωρ* (divine water), Thales' *ἀρχή*. The coin, in other words, is an allegory for the origin of the philosophical experience, and it was not the coins that shaped Thales' mind, but rather Thales who fashioned the coin. Hence, the *ἔργον* of Acheloios, his loving iconic posture, produced the initial glimmer of the beatific vision experienced at the very origin of philosophy.

If my assessment of Thales and the influence of Acheloios is accurate, then the account of the origin of philosophy advocated by the Neo-Marxians is successfully refuted, and the gateway leading us out of the Marxian tragedy revealed. The social use of coins did not cause philosophical speculation, even if it did trigger the mind to formulate 'abstract ideas of the universe as an impersonal system' by projecting the idea of an 'ideal substance' onto the

cosmos. Philosophical speculation, which consists of the love of wisdom prompted by beatific vision, was precipitated by abstractions from and engagement with the Acheloios tradition, and involves the recognition of various ways of assessing the world, with particular emphasis on the fact that such hermeneutical frameworks are not mutually exclusive, but complementary or perhaps even tautological. Hence, *ὕδωρ* is the *ἀρχή* and 'all things are full of gods.' Thus, the problem with the Marxian framework turns out to be its exclusivity—in their account all ideologies have (or correspond to) no permanent, fundamentally real existence outside of the social context, and therefore any philosophical hermeneutic beyond the methodological postulate of dialectical materialism is necessarily erroneous. While the Marxian framework is of course useful for insisting on the inclusion of historical context, the recognition of serious economic imbalances, and in pointing out the dangers of the super-structures of social reality (which often *are* delusional), it offers an incomplete (and therefore insufficient) view because it is incapable of recognizing the validity of anything outside the system—we are left with only flux. But now we have the necessary insight to transcend the confines of the Marxian methodological postulate. Now we can look again to Acheloios, just as Thales did, and there, hidden in plain sight this entire time, we will see that the man-faced bull is the liminal icon that can reorient us toward the *οὐσια ὄντως οὖσα*. Indeed, some 2600 years after Thales, Heidegger asked, 'What element, concealed in the ground and soil, enters and lives in the roots that support and nourish the tree [of philosophy]?' That element is none other than divine water, and the new beginning of philosophy emerges with the recapitulation of its glory.

Chapter 1

Marx to Sohn-Rethel: Dialectical Materialist Approaches to the Origin of Philosophy

'Some of them drag down everything from heaven and the invisible to earth, actually grasping rocks and trees with their hands; for they lay their hands on all such things and maintain stoutly that that alone exists which can be touched and handled; for they define existence and body, or matter, as identical, and if anyone says anything else, which has no body, exists, they despise him utterly, and will not listen to any other theory than their own.'

-The Eleatic Stranger[1]

If there is a modern thinker that is as profoundly influential yet deeply misunderstood as Thales, it is Karl Marx, the nineteenth-century radical leftist most notable for *Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto.* He dismissed all ideologies as delusions, argued that individual consciousness was really just 'false consciousness,' advocated for the elimination of private property and dissolution of the family, and is said to have laughed maniacally when subjects of morality were discussed. Most importantly, he was one of the founders of a new social *modus operandi* that has lead to the deaths of hundreds of millions of people worldwide. And yet, he essentially advocated for the alleviation of human suffering during a time in which working-class individuals, including child-laborers, were horribly oppressed—which is indeed a noble goal. So how can the actual ramifications of Marx's position hit so far off the mark when it is implemented? The short answer is that Marxism is utterly unphilosophical. But in order to really unpack what that means, we need to know: (1) What does Marx believe philosophy consists of?; (2) What is philosophy, really truly?; and, (3) How does Marx's misunderstanding result in tragedy? By the end of this book we'll have an answer to all of these questions, and a solution for overcoming this tragedy with recourse to Acheloios (a solution initially offered by Plato). This chapter, however, focuses exclusively on exhibiting the lack of an ideological foundation in Marxism, and how this formed the basis for later thinkers to argue that all philosophical activity, the genesis of which is usually attributed to Thales, was caused by coined money. By examining the underlying position and its ramifications, we will have an answer to the first question above. Indeed, we will see that in all three Marxian accounts, there is a common theme: the idea of a fundamentally real transcendental realm that serves as the source of value and reference point for abstraction is utterly delusional, and bourgeois philosophy likewise consists of absolute nonsense that is downright detrimental to humankind.

Karl Marx

Use-Value, Exchange-Value, and the Critique of Aristotle

The fundamental distinction between use-value and exchange-value is an essential one for understanding the deontological character of Marx's methodological postulate of dialectical

[1] Plato, *Sophist* 246a-b, trans. Harold North Fowler, *Plato: Theaetetus; Sophist,* Loeb Classical Library Volume 123 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

(historical)[2] materialism. Use-value (*Gebrauchswert*) refers to the practical value or utility of a thing,[3] i.e. the usefulness of a thing in achieving some practical end. A rather simple illustration might be an axe—the axe's use-value lies simply in chopping at things, like wood, in order to harvest fuel or secure building materials. Perhaps it can also be used for protection, depending on the type of axe, and that would also contribute to its use-value. Its materials, like iron and wood, might also contribute in the sense that, when the item breaks down, such materials might be recycled into something else that is useful. One could conceive of any tool in the same way, namely, that it performs a practical function and as such, has use-value. But use-value is not limited to tools. The use-value of wheat, for instance, would be nutrition—it is valuable insofar as it can be eaten and provide nourishment, thus it has use-value as food. In all cases, the most important thing to note about use-value is that, for Marx, such value is the only real, intrinsic value an object might possess.

Exchange-value (*Tauschwert*), on the other hand, is categorically distinct from use-value. Importantly, exchange-value is not physical at all but social in the most pure sense, or, as Marx says, 'Unlike the crude tangible material of which use-values are composed, this value quasi-material does not contain a single atom of physical matter.'[4] To put it briefly (and we'll unpack the ontographic dimension below), Marx claims that exchange-value emerges in the minds of the parties involved in an exchange when an item becomes a commodity, thus exhibiting value outside or beyond its use-value, but nowhere in the actual item.[5] Exchange-value thus occupies a space between goods.[6] It is the socially-imposed value of a thing as a commodity, and this value emerges from the ultimate governing 'substance' that Marx identifies as abstract human labor.[7] To provide an example, we might value a diamond at $4,000 based on the labor behind it—it had to be mined, possibly smuggled, cut, polished, inspected for defects, packaged, shipped, then secured and displayed. All of these various human labors become unconsciously homogenized during an exchange under the ultimate idea of abstract human labor, and this is the source of exchange-value.[8]

Note, however, that in the Marxian model, the beauty of the diamond does not mean it has intrinsic value, since one would reduce even the diamond's beauty to the amount of abstract labor necessary to acquire and/or cut it. This position is, of course, difficult to swallow, since I can easily envision finding a beautiful thing in nature, like a piece of quartz or colorful flower, and valuing it precisely because it is beautiful, despite its commonality. Nonetheless, to really understand what Marx meant, conceptually, it helps to examine how his original insight departed from Aristotle's earlier discussion of the origin of coined money. Aristotle believed there was no real, single source of abstract value between objects in an exchange, and the

[2] I do not differentiate between the two, following Sohn-Rethel's analysis. See Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology*, trans. Martin Sohn-Rethel (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1978), 199-201.
[3] Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, working translation of Hans G. Ehrbar (1890/2002), 4/126:1/50:1. Citations for Marx are arranged as follows: Ehrbar's pagination (Karl Marx, *Das Kapital,* edited and translated by Hans G. Ehrbar, available online at http://content.csbs.utah.edu/~ehrbar/cap1.pdf.) / Translator's prototype English translation pagination (Karl Marx, *Capital,* trans. Ben Fowkes (Vintage, 1977) / German 4th edition pagination (Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Oekonomie,* 4th edition (1890).
[4] Marx, *Das Kapital*, 45/138:2/62:2.
[5] Ibid., 167/177:3/98.1
[6] Ibid., 13/128:3/52:4ff.
[7] Ibid., 13/ 128.2/52.3.
[8] Ibid., 103/156:1/78:2.

absence of a real abstract value meant we cannot have true commensurability of exchanged objects, hence the need for coinage. [9] The most essential passage (which Marx analyses) is reproduced below.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1133b:14:

> Money then serves as a measure which makes things commensurable and so reduces them to equality. If there were no exchange there would be no association, and there can be no exchange without equality, and no equality without commensurability. *Though therefore it is impossible for things so different to become commensurable in the strict sense*, our demand furnishes a sufficiently accurate common measure for practical purposes. There must therefore be some one standard, and this accepted by agreement (which is why it is called nomisma, customary currency; for such a standard makes all things commensurable, since all things can be measured by money).[10] (emphasis added)

Here *νόμισμα* (*nómisma* / coin) is related to *νόμος* (*nómos* / law or custom), and operates as a medium of exchange that, practically speaking, makes all things commensurable.[11] In his assessment, Marx focuses on the line italicized above.[12] As he points out, Aristotle clearly denies any substance that would enable true commensurability of commodities in the strict sense. Marx, however, identifies the 'Secret' which Aristotle missed. His solution to Aristotle's commensurability problem was the equality of human labor (thus the aforementioned 'human labor in the abstract' and 'abstract human labor'), which he claims does truly homogenize goods in an exchange since it operates as a universal standard existing in a socially-constructed web of intersubjectivity that all goods have recourse to: 'The secret of the expression of value, namely, that all kinds of labour are equal and equivalent, because, and so far as they are human labour in general, cannot be deciphered, until the notion of human equality has already acquired the fixity of a popular prejudice.'[13] It was therefore the social context of the 4th-century Hellenistic world that prohibited Aristotle from grasping the equality of human labor as the source of value, since such slave labor was free.[14] Marx, therefore, posits abstract human labor as the 'common substance' (*gemeinschaftliche Substanz*), and this value is the means by which goods are truly commensurable.[15] Accordingly, this source of value has no independent ontological status apart from the exchange; it is entirely dependent upon the social realm and does not occupy a spot outside people's heads in the manner of Platonic Forms. Most importantly, Marx's identification of 'abstract human labour' (*abstract menschliche Arbeit*) [16] as the common substance which homogenizes goods is an idea later thinkers have argued plays an essential role in the very origin of philosophy.

[9] For Aristotle, the commensurability of objects in an exchange is ultimately governed by individual desire or need. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1133a26.
[10] Trans. H. Rackman, from Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, translated by H. Rackman, Aristotle Volume XIX, Loeb Classical Library 73 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 1926).
[11] In fact, a denomination of ancient coinage is called the *νόμος*.
[12] Marx, *Das Kapital,* 88f/151:3/73:5
[13] Ibid., 151:5/74:2. Trans. Hans G. Ehrbar, *op. cit.*
[14] Ibid., 90/151:5/74:2. Abstract human labor was presumably still operative on the unconscious level in these societies. It was simply the recognition of its role as the ultimate 'substance' of value that was not apparent to ancient commentators, according to Marx.
[15] Ibid., 89/151:4/74:1.
[16] Ibid., 13/128:2/52:3.

Dialectical/Historical Materialism

But how exactly does this notion of abstract human labor fit into Marx's conceptual scheme, since it is not a material thing? First and foremost, Marx was undoubtedly a materialist, despite his disapproval of scientific materialism. As Alfred Schmidt recounts, although Marx defended his work against accusations that it was too materialistic (in the ossified, metaphysical sense), he also 'referred to its "relation to naturalistic materialism."'[17] Whereas Feuerbach advocated a strict materialism determined by the laws of nature and discoverable through science, Marx complained that, 'The weak points in the abstract materialism of natural science, a materialism that excludes history and its process, are at once evident from the abstract and ideological conceptions of its spokespeople.'[18] Hence the paradigmatic nature of natural science solidifies it in the realm of the bourgeoisie, and Marx therefore distanced himself from that school of thought because it is grounded in ideology and thus divorced from history.[19] Instead, for Marx, we are inseparable from a socio-historical power struggle that takes place in a thoroughly material world.[20] Schmidt's work demonstrates this aptly. Indeed, he catalogs the ontographic terms employed by Marx when referring to 'extra-human reality': material, nature, stuff of nature, natural thing, earth, objective moments of labor's existence, objective, and material (*sachlich*) conditions of labor,[21] claiming:

> This concept of nature as the whole of reality did not result in an ultimate *Weltanschauung* or a dogmatic metaphysic but simply circumscribed the horizon of thought within which the new materialism moved...This concept of nature was 'dogmatic' enough to exclude from the theoretical construction anything Marx called mysticism or ideology; at the same time it was conceived undogmatically and broad-mindedly enough to prevent nature itself from receiving a metaphysical consecration or indeed ossifying into a final ontological principal.[22]

Marxian critical theory thus operates within the realm of materialism, even though Marx would object to extending his methodological postulate to the static characterization connoted by the term.[23] And yet, his positioning of his own views vis-à-vis Hegel's dialectical method allow us to call him, quite properly, a dialectical materialist:[24] 'My dialectical method is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it...the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms

[17] A.Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx* (London: Verso, 2014), 20.
[18] Marx, *Das Kapital*, 2557, listing footnote 89 for 1024/492.3/391.5. Cf. also when Marx says, 'Do not think, do not ask me any questions, for as soon as you think and ask questions your abstraction from the existence of nature and man becomes meaningless.' Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), 166.
[19] Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, 29. Indeed, according to Feuerbach's rationale, Marx would be the true atheist, since he dismisses all the values traditionally attached to God, whereas Feuerbach would not go so far. See Ludwig Feuerbach, *Essence du christianisme,* trans. Joseph Roy (Paris: A. Lacroix. Verbecekhoven, 1864), 46-7. For discussion, see Henri De Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, trans. Edith M. Riley, Anne Englund Nash, and Marc Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), 31-2.
[20] Ibid., 19ff ('The Non-ontological character of Marxist Materialism').
[21] Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, 29.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Cf. to Sohn-Rethel, who argues against the idea that dialectical materialism is a *Weltanschauung*, and instead a methodological postulate (discussed below).
[24] Marx, *Das Kapital*, lvii/102:2/27:3. See also the overview in G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 1-27, which discusses the influence of Hegel in depth.

of thought.'[25] Essentially, there is no vertical axis extending beyond the Marxian 'horizon' to some ultimate truth to which we all have recourse (as in Platonic Forms accessed via beatific vision)—indeed, there is seemingly just a historically-evolving horizontal axis of interlocutors existing in a thoroughly material world.[26]

Returning, then, to the question: What about abstract human labor, which Marx agrees is immaterial?[27] For Marx, it is not fundamentally real. The commodification of things 'bestows'[28] a 'ghostlike material' (*gespenstige Gegenständlichkeit*).[29] As Marx puts it:

> ...the commodity form of the products of labor, and the value relation in which it represents itself, have absolutely nothing to do with the physical nature of products or with any relations they have as physical objects. It is the specific social relation of the people themselves which assumes for them, *as in an optical illusion*, the form of a relation of things. [30] (emphasis added)

Essentially, the abstraction that is produced by commodities does not correspond to some real, intangible world of absolute forms, and instead, this 'illusion'(*phantasmagorische*) is produced because 'the dominant social relation is the relation between men as possessors of commodities.'[31] Accordingly, for Marx, abstract human labor causes intellectual fetishisms that ultimately result in the exploitation of one group by another.[32] (In the bourgeois realm, for instance, the fetish is behind the control of the means of production).[33] Importantly, Marx's position also means that God does not exist, since the concept of God, too, is an abstraction from commodities, and thus the reach of the Marxian methodological postulate extends far beyond epistemology.[34] Hence, as Schmidt recounts, 'Human self-consciousness, he [Marx]

[25] Ibid. See also Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge, 2011), 126, who characterizes Marx's philosophy in the following way 'nothing remains but the relativistic dissolution of things into relations and processes.' See also Paul Blackledge, Historical Materialism, in *The Oxford Handbook of Karl Marx*, edited by M. Vidal, T. Smith, T. Rotta, and P. Prew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 37-56.

[26] This outlook does not necessarily deny objective reality, according to some commentators. See Lenin's discussion (Vladmir Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism: Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy*, Vol. I, *Lenin Selected Works*, Volume XIV (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1908), 198): 'From the standpoint of modern materialism, i.e. Marxism, the *limits* of approximation of our knowledge to the objective, absolute truth are historically conditional, but the existence of such truth is unconditional, and the fact that we are approaching nearer to it is also unconditional...In a word, every ideology is historically conditional, but it is unconditionally true that to every scientific ideology (as distinct, for instance, from religious ideology) there corresponds an objective truth, absolute nature...The materialists dialectics of Marx and Engels certainly does contain relativism, that is, it recognizes the relativity of all our knowledge, not in the sense of the denial of objective truth, but in the sense of the historically conditional nature of the limits of the approximation of our knowledge of this truth.' Cited by George Thomson, *The First Philosophers: Studies in Ancient Greek Society* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977),156.

[27] Marx, *Das Kapital*, 45/138:2/62:2.

[28] Schmidt's phrasing, cf. Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, 68.

[29] Marx, *Das Kapital*, 13/128:3/52:4.

[30] Ibid., 134/164:3/86:2.

[31] Ibid., 91/151:5/74:2.

[32] Ibid., 149/169:1/90:1, 'It is precisely forms of this kind which yield the categories for bourgeois economics.'

[33] Ibid.

[34] For Marx on religion, see Peter Schuller, Karl Marx's Atheism, *Science and Society* 39, 3 (1975): 331-345. For the 'paradoxical' ethical ramifications of Marxian dialectical materialism, the most complete work is Steven Lukes, *Marxism and Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). For Lukes, Marxism results in relativism, since local conditions cannot be extrapolated from to determine general ethical ideals which might determine rights (*Recht*), and because of its inability to establish any parameters, Marxist societies have often done horrendous things. (Ibid, *passim*, but cf. 145-149).

wrote in his dissertation, must be recognized as the "supreme divinity.'"[35] Thus, for Marx, to bring about a new world in which suffering is eliminated, we have to recognize that we have become slaves to the abstraction, and 'attempt to direct men's attention towards the ghostly internal logic of their own conditions.'[36] It is therefore in recognizing the delusional nature of ideologies, including the soul, Beauty, and God, and how all of these are symptoms of the control of commodities over men, that marks the first step toward a Communist utopia. As Henri de Lubac accurately stated in discussing Communist atheism, 'God's place has been well and truly taken.'[37]

George Thomson

Upon this background, over 100 years after Marx, a brilliant scholar named George Thomson made a discovery. He was a fairly well-known English classicist who, after becoming an outspoken Marxist, began teaching Greek (apparently with a Marxist spin) at Charles University, Prague, sometime in the 1950s. [38] His 'discovery' was that the advent of coinage occurred just before the advent of philosophy, and this historical fact supported Marx's theory of the relation between commodities and abstract ideologies. He presented his provisional findings in a book called *The First Philosophers*.[39] In it, Thomson claims that the advent of coinage prompted a fissure in society between mental and manual work (thus thought and action).[40] Following his predecessor, he believes exchange-value overshadows use-value when an item becomes a commodity, and the ultimate source of this exchange-value, as we saw, is what Marx referred to as 'human labour in the abstract.'[41] Thomson therefore argues that in early Greek philosophy we see a '"false conciousness" gradually emerging and imposing on the world categories of thought derived from commodity production, as though these categories belonged, not to society, but to nature.'[42] This is not to say that before coinage commodities had no impact on humankind, but, rather, that the essential rupture between though and action occurred only with the advent of coinage, which was the pinnacle of commodity-exchanging society.

The most essential piece of evidence supporting Thomson's theory is his examination of Parmenides' notion of Being.[43] In Thomson's reading, Parmenides' 'The Way of Truth'(8.53-4) is a refutation of Pythagorean dualism,[44] in which Parmenides elaborates his monistic view of the cosmos, which has the following features: it is timeless, indivisible, motionless, unchanging,

[35] Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, 39, citing Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, 167. For an analysis of Feuerbach's view on religion, which significantly influenced Marx, see De Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism,* 28-31.
[36] Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, 41.
[37] De Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, 179.
[38] John Murray, Review of *The First Philosophers* by George Thomson, in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 45, No. 178 (Summer, 1956): 41.
[39] Thomson, *The First Philosophers*, 301.
[40] Ibid., 336ff, but especially 345, in which Thomson surmises, 'These concepts, which constitute the Kantian "autonomy of reason," are the mental reflex of the social relations brought into being by commodity production, which has been a feature of the economic basis of class society in all its successive epochs.'
[41] Thomson, *The First Philosophers*, 301. Cf. Marx, *Das Kapital,* 15/129:1/53:2.
[42] Thomson, *The First Philosophers*, 301.
[43] Ibid., 291ff, but particularly 294-5. His analysis of Parmenides is similar to Seaford's analysis of Anaximander's *ἄπειρον*.
[44] Many would dispute that the Pythagoreans held a true dualist position. Cf. R. Renehan, On the Greek Origins of the Concepts Incorporeality and Immateriality, 105-138. For an alternative view concerning Empedokles, see P. Curd, Where are Love and Strife? Incoporeality in Empedocles, in *Early Greek Philosophy: The Presocratics and the Emergence of Reason,* edited by Joseph McCoy (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013): 113-138.

limited (spatially finite), and spherical (spatially finite yet no beginning or end). As Parmenides himself records:

Parmenides, Fr. 8=Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 145.1-146.25 [lines 36-41]:

> There is not, and never shall be, anything besides what is, because Moira has bound it to be whole and immoveable. Therefore all those things which mortals have laid down, believing them to be true, such as coming into being and perishing, being and not being, changing place and colour, *are empty names*.[45] (emphasis added)

For Thomson, Parmenides was the first to really express the notion of a single, ideal principle that was only tacitly expressed by the earlier Presocratics.[46] More, because the exchange-value of commodities is a 'purely abstract' reality in the Marxian vision, Thomson claims that 'The Parmenidean One, together with the later idea of "substance," may therefore be described as a reflex or projection of the substance of exchange value.'[47] This is an essential development from Marx's original theory and one that will be reiterated in Richard Seaford's work discussed in the next chapter.[48]

From a sociological and political standpoint Thomson demonizes speculative philosophy as part of the realm of the bourgeoisie, and advocates, following Lenin,[49] that such speculation ought to be controlled 'to the extent that it is made the subject of a scientific theory of society.'[50] At the heart of Thomson's criticism are the stories of the Greeks themselves: Midas, whose touch turns everything to gold and, as Aristotle recounts, eventually leads to his own death, and Gyges, whose magical gold ring enables him to kill the king and thereby become king are, for Thomson, early warnings against the power of money. Thomson thus quotes Alcaeus' famous saying, 'money makes the man/man is money' (*χρήματ' ἄνηρ / chrēmat' ánēr*),[51] proclaiming that 'there is nothing money cannot buy; there is nothing a man with money cannot become.'[52] In Thomson's view money-making is an unrestricted end-in-itself, and so is a 'universal, incalculable, and subversive force,'[53] and this fact was clearly recognized by the Greeks. Basically, not only did money give rise to a form of abstract speculation which exacerbated the exploitation of one social group by another, money itself was an unlimited

[45] Translation G. Thomson, *op. cit.,* but specifically 295. It is unclear how he arrived at the clause 'are empty names.' The McKirahan and Curd translation, though similar, lacks this embellishment (see Patricia Curd and Richard McKirahan, *A Presocratic Reader: Selected Fragments ad Testimonia,* Second edition (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2011), 60); nor is the clause included in G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 252.
[46] For coverage of Thales and the Milesians, see Thomson, *The First Philosophers,* 156-172.
[47] Ibid., 301.
[48] It should be no surprise that Thomson is most sympathetic to Heraclitus, a predecessor of dialectical materialism. Cf. Ibid., 131-5. Indeed, one should compare the dialectical materialists to the account of the Protagorean *sophoi* discussed in Plato's *Theaetetus*, cf. Plato, *Theaetetus,* 151e-187a, which discusses Heraclitus (ibid., 179c-183c). See Chapter 12 for further discussion.
[49] Thomson, *The First Philosophers,* 156.
[50] Ibid. Cf. also ibid., 140 (in which he admires Cornford but claims the limitations of his theory on the origin of philosophy are 'limitations of bourgeois philosophy itself'). For concise reviews, see Murray, Review of *The First Philosophers* by George Thomson, 239-41; Kevin Herbert, Review of *Studies in Ancient Greek Society,* Vol. II: *The First Philosophers* by George Thomson, in *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (Oct., 1956): 41-3.
[51] Alcaeus, *Fragments*, 360= Schol. Pind. *Isthm*. 2.17, from David A. Campbell, trans., *Greek Lyric, Volume I: Sappho and Alcaeus*, Loeb Classical Library 142 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).
[52] Thomson, *The First Philosophers*, 195.
[53] Ibid.

force for exploitation with no recourse to self-regulation. Hence, even those parties engaged in exploiting others are under the control of money. In an epistemological sense, just as an abstract hermeneutical framework potentially eclipses all other views (à la scientific paradigms or religious dogmas), so too money has the potential to be the ultimate determining force among men in the natural world, overruling all other factors. Thus, as Schmidt recounts concerning the Marxist worldview that Thomson adopts, 'it is a unified critical judgment on previous history, to the effect that men have allowed themselves to be degraded into objects of the blind and mechanical process of its economic dynamic.'[54]

Alfred Sohn-Rethel

In the early 1970s another Marxist philosopher and social critic named Alfred Sohn-Rethel published *Warenform und Denkform*,[55] his critique of epistemology that argued along similar, though slightly more philosophical lines to what Thompson originally proposed (with important differences).[56] His book was published with the utmost urgency: technocrats were essentially taking over the world, and no bricks, or 'more effectively perhaps, a homemade bomb'[57] would stop it, as his son recounts. The goal of the work was to establish, through a painstaking and downright ironic process of bourgeois-style philosophy, how the original fissure between workers and technocrats emerged, for only then could the forces controlling science and technology be kept in check. The basis of Sohn-Rethel's argument is that the abstraction involved in any exchange of commodities achieved a culmination with the advent of coinage, which Sohn-Rethel calls 'abstract things,' leading to the mind's ability to produce philosophical and scientific frameworks for determining the ultimate principles of nature and man.[58] This projection is highly successful in science, insofar as the frameworks allow for the revelation, manipulation, and control of nature (hence similar to the Heideggerian notion of technology as an ontological condition which enframes (*Gestell*) the world).[59]

A useful conceptual starting point is Sohn-Rethel's juxtaposition of the Marxian position with Kant's paradigm. In Kant's system, synthetic *a priori* categories of the mind,[60] such as

[54] Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, 41.
[55] Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Warenform und Denkform: Aufsätze* (Frankfurt: Europäische Veragsanstalt, 1971).
[56] Specifically, in terms of the theory of reflection, which Thomson (and originally Seaford) seems to hold. Cf. Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour,* 72, also discussed below.
[57] Martin Sohn-Rethel, Translator's Foreword, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, ix.
[58] Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, 35-56, for an analysis of the exchange abstraction.
[59] Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology, in *Basic Writings*, translated by W. Lovitt, edited by D. Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1993): 311-341. This projection is, in essence, akin to the phenomenon of calculative thinking discussed throughout Heidegger's works, though, characteristically, his terminology changes quite frequently. The division between calculative and meditative thinking is best exemplified in Heidegger's critique of the Cartesian paradigm which we find in M. Heidegger, Introduction to 'What is Metaphysics?,' in *Pathmarks*, edited by Walter Kaufman (Cambridge: University Press, 1998): 277-290, in which Heidegger examines Descartes' comparison of philosophy to a tree: metaphysics the roots, physics the trunk, various sciences the branches. Heidegger argues that this framework ignores Being as such, the 'soil' in which the tree is rooted, and thus 'metaphysics sees beings as beings,' and forgets about Being. Simply put, the technologically-induced projection à la Sohn-Rethel is tantamount to the Cartesian metaphysical appropriation of the world. The opposite form of thinking would be 'meditative thinking,' wherein the questioning of the meaning of Being in its difference from beings is the pinnacle, though the terminology here, too, is inconsistent. For instance, in 'What is Metaphysics?,' it is 'essential thinking,' or *wesentlichen Denken* (So Martin Heidegger, What is Metaphysics?, in *Existentialism—From Dostoevesky to Sartre*, edited by Walter Kaufman (New American Library, 1975)). However, others use 'meditative thinking,' or *besinnliches Denken,* reflecting the terminology Heidegger employs in his 'Memorial Address' (So Martin Heidegger, Memorial Address, in *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper, 1966): 43-57).
[60] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman K. Smith (New York: Bedford, 1965), 52ff, 65-82.

space and time, are imposed on primary substance in order for it to become comprehensible (though, of course, not in-itself).[61] In Sohn-Rethel's iteration of the Marxian system, however, commodity exchange prompts the abstraction in the mind,[62] and this abstraction promulgates epistemological frameworks such as we see in Kant's philosophical contributions.[63] In Sohn-Rethel's own words, 'Abstraction can be likened to the workshop of conceptual thought and its process must be a materialistic one if the assertion that consciousness is determined by social being is to hold true.'[64] Sohn-Rethel therefore follows Marx in arguing that abstraction originates in actions, not minds, hence the fundamentally physical, social nature of dialectical materialism in Sohn-Rethel's account.[65] In an ontographic sense, Sohn-Rethel therefore distinguishes between two natures—*erste Nature,* corresponding to physical elements of the world, and *zweite Nature*, corresponding to socially constructed, or man-made 'nature' that exists entirely within the minds of people.[66]

Sohn-Rethel's major contribution to the Neo-Marxian school therefore comes in his articulation of the phenomenon of exchange-abstraction (*Die Tauschabstraktion*), which was only tacitly expressed by his predecessors:

> The pattern of movement inherent in exchange abstraction introduces then a definitive concept of nature as material object world, a world from which man, as the subject of social activities, has withdrawn himself. We said that, in terms of exchange abstraction, time becomes unhistorical time and space ungeographical space; indeed they become abstract time and abstract space, endless time and limitless space.[67]

In this view, ideological concepts emerge from the exchange insofar as the exchange-value of the commodity is removed from the object itself and occupies a 'space' only within the mind. It is from this point that various extrapolations and metamorphoses occur. More, it is important to note, as Sohn-Rethel does, that the exchange itself *is* an abstraction (he uses the term *Realabstraktion*, to emphasize the physicality over ideal or conceptual abstraction),[68] and ideal abstraction enters the thinking mind only after the exchange takes place.[69] In this sense, abstraction is an entirely physically and socially-induced phenomenon and, in fact, men are not even aware of the exchange abstraction that takes place in the moment of exchange.[70]

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[61] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Revised Edition, trans. G. Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), §32, 66.
[62] Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, 19, citing Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), and Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (New York: International Publishers, 1970).
[63] For Sohn-Rethel's analysis of Kant, see Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, 13-17. As Sohn-Rethel surmises, 'The Kantian enquiry was aimed at an explanation of the phenomenon of the human intellect such as it manifested itself in the mathematical science founded by Galileo and perfected by Newton. What was wrong with Kant's enquiry was that he looked into the nature of the human mind for an answer.' (Ibid., 17). Cf. to Thomson, *The First Philosophers,* 336ff, but especially 345.
[64] Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, 18.
[65] Ibid., 20. For his support of the materialist approach, see Chapter 37, 'The Theory of Reflection and Its Incompatibilities as a Theory of Science.' (Ibid., 189ff).
[66] Ibid., 57.
[67] Ibid., 56.
[68] For the switch from the former to the latter, see ibid., 60ff.
[69] Cf. Ibid., 26-7.
[70] Ibid., 20.

When it comes specifically to the origin of coinage, which occurred in Ionia and Lydia a generation or so before Thales' started philosophizing,[71] Sohn-Rethel therefore finds 'that real abstraction operating in exchange engenders the ideal abstraction basic to Greek philosophy and to modern science.'[72] Simply put, coins, as 'abstract things,'[73] provided the initial impetus for all purely theoretical approaches to the world: 'Owing to the concepts drawn from the exchange abstraction the intellect is equipped with instruments of cognition which, if employed in a suitable method, can yield a knowledge of nature from sources totally alien to manual labour.'[74] Thus coinage essentially prompted a divide between manual labor and intellectual labor: the abstract human labor remains tied to exchange, whereas the intellectual abstraction (ideal or conceptual abstraction) takes off on its own, representing a fundamental first split between 'head and hand.'[75] Thus Thales, in formulating his philosophy (whatever it consisted of) was able to discuss nature as an independent 'reality separated from man,'[76] and for Sohn-Rethel, this is a direct result of the emergence of coined money just before him.

The ultimate difference between Thomson and Sohn-Rethel appears to revolve around the notion of reflection, which Sohn-Rethel discusses toward the end of his work. For Sohn-Rethel, it is a mistake to think that the mind simply reflects properties of nature back onto the world. Concerning this idea of reflection, he claims it is an example of natural materialism and 'no amount of elaboration can succeed in changing it into historical materialism.'[77] Although Thomson never discusses the nuances of what happens in the mind, his adherence to the theory of reflexivity indicates that the ontological parameters of his position are of the natural materialism type. Sohn-Rethel, however, differentiated his view from such theories just as Marx did vis-à-vis Feuerbach, insisting that Marx's dialectical (or historical) materialism is not a philosophical system or worldview, but simply a 'methodological postulate.'[78] Thus, Sohn-Rethel surmises: 'The Marxist method in *Capital* is the continuous reference of concept to reality, of reality to ideology. Reality is put on trial upon the summons of established theory, and, in the face of reality, theory stands convicted as necessary, and necessarily, false consciousness.'[79]

Conclusion

Ultimately, what we have in these accounts is a school of thought that explains the origin of philosophy with recourse to (historical) materialism, here 'philosophy' being understood, quite specifically, as abstract frameworks that explain reality with recourse to a single, ideal, impersonal principle or substance. For the Marxians, a specific technological innovation, coinage, is the fundamental cause of these abstract philosophical frameworks for understanding

[71] The dating of the birth of coinage, discussed in the Chapter 6, is c. 650 to 630 BC; for Thales, his birth is c. 640/624 BC or thereabouts. His dates are also discussed in Chapter 6. For an overview of the archaeological evidence supporting Sohn-Rethel's claim, see C. Schinzel, Thales und Das Geld: Überlegungen zum Einfluss des Münzgeldes auf die Entstehung der Philosophie, *NAC* 40 (2011): 1-15.
[72] Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, 28. For a later, more refined position on *Realabstraktion*, see, Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Geistige und körperliche Arbeit: Zur Theorie der gesellschaftlichen Synthesis* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 41f.
[73] Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour,* 19.
[74] Ibid., 73.
[75] Ibid., 60.
[76] Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labor,* 72.
[77] Ibid., 189-90.
[78] Ibid.,196.
[79] Ibid.

the world. Whereas Marx did not address the Presocratics specifically in this particular respect, he laid the foundation with his analysis of commodities and 'method' of dialectical materialism, which is the underlying horizon within which both Thomson and Sohn-Rethel furnished their respective analyses. For these later thinkers (and I'm sure Marx would agree), the use of coinage prompts the emergence (or culmination) of a false-consciousness in the mind, which projects onto the world ideological frameworks. And although there (seemingly) is an objective world in Thomson and Sohn-Rethel's accounts, we only have access to the historically conditioned, 'fluctuating' truth available through employment of the methodological postulate. Moreover, in all cases, it is man himself, through his own, objectified labor, through his sacrifice, that the power of nature can be harnessed and put to use in creating a utopian society, which is presumably some form of optimal, natural efficiency with no clear, ultimate teleological component (evaluated through ecology, perhaps?). The most pressing issue preventing such a society from coming about—be it Communism or some other iteration emerging from the Marxian methodology—is a failure to recognize the delusional, fantastic nature of the various ideologies and mystical outlooks emerging from commodities that derail mankind. In short, the problem is so-called bourgeois philosophy (and religion), which for the Marxians is a rather troublesome symptom of this uncanny disease of the mind.

Chapter 2

Richard Seaford's Contribution

'Now all these false issues have a way of looking quite fresh, especially to a fresh generation.'

-G.K. Chesterton[1]

Both Thomson and Sohn-Rethel's works had relatively limited impact in the Western tradition, which was heavily doxographic in its approach to the origin of philosophy, and the fascinating relation of coinage to philosophy has gone largely unacknowledged in academia until quite recently, most notably in the work of the classicist Richard Seaford.[2] Seaford's work takes a renewed interest in the relation of coinage to philosophy and develops a more elaborate justification for the general theory of a numismatic-technological causality. Unlike Sohn-Rethel, throughout his original work on the subject Seaford does not concern himself with the larger ontological or political implications surrounding the argument,[3] and, in fact, leaves 'aside the problem of the precise relation of this [exchange] value to labour.'[4] In a sense, Seaford adopts a genuine Marxian approach—employing the methodological postulate of Marxian dialectical materialism so well that he simply omits the deeper ontological and epistemological problems involved in theories concerning the origin of philosophical activity. I hope to demonstrate in this chapter that he does in fact stake a claim by following the Marxian method, which we have seen exhibits certain ontographic (hence by extension ontological) parameters, however carefully Seaford handles the potential objections to the exclusivity of his theory.[5] Indeed, after reviewing his earlier work, I will point to the later developments of his theory in which his approach is much more overtly Marxian, eventually claiming that even individual self-consciousness (the 'Wester Subject') originates through a process of monetization via what he calls introjection, complementing the so-called projection of metaphysical cosmology. Ultimately, Seaford's goal, throughout all of his works, is to exhibit archaeological and literary evidence supporting the thesis that the process of monetization and advent of coinage prompted the 'advent of the idea of the universe as an intelligible order subject to the uniformity of impersonal power,' [6] as well as the notion of a 'comprehensive, bound inner self,'[7] and that all this occurred via the 'phenomena of cosmisation (cosmic projection) and interiorization (introjection).'[8] But as we will see, as brilliant as the argument

[1] G.K. Chesterton, Why I Am a Catholic, in *The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton*, Volume 3 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 130.
[2] Richard Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind: Homer, Philosophy, Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Richard Seaford, Monetization and the Genesis of the Western Subject, *Historical Materialism* (20.1.1 (2012): 1-25; Richard Seaford, *Tragedy, Ritual and Money in Ancient Greece: Selected Essays,* edited by R. Bostock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Richard Seaford, *The Origins of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and Ancient India: A Historical Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[3] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 208.
[4] Ibid., 1, note 1.
[5] Seaford mentions the non-exclusive nature of his theory with passing acknowledgement of other influences. Cf. e.g., Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 12, 175ff, 217ff. Marx is mentioned only twice, once in a footnote about the phantom-like character of money. (Ibid., 248, note 91).
[6] Ibid., 175.
[7] Seaford, *The Origins of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and Ancient India,* i.
[8] Ibid., 4.

is, this causal relation is not necessarily true, and indeed metaphysical cosmology is probably not the best description of Presocratic philosophy, especially concerning Thales.

Basic Presuppositions

One of the most important concepts underlying Seaford's theory is the idea that ancient coins are fiduciary, meaning that their redeemability is the paramount characteristic and not their intrinsic worth. The intrinsic value of the metal, while important because it creates confidence (especially true in the earliest stage), is not the decisive ingredient that distinguishes Greek money from primitive money, since precious metals were traded much earlier. Specifically, Seaford describes the fiduciary dimension to Greek coinage by explaining that the ornamental use-value of precious metals evaporates when they are stamped, and that the resultant 'promiscuous exchangeability' of coined money marginalizes all other potential values which are now supplanted with the coin's 'practical effectiveness...as signs of monetary value.'[9] Thus it is the sign on coinage that is the essential ingredient, because with the use-value removed, this sign or symbol establishes coinage as an 'ideal substance,' i.e., one that is the 'embodiment of the absolute abstract equivalence between commodities imposed by exchange.'[10] For Seaford, the recognition of the difference (or antithesis) between sign and substance was the pivotal ingredient in the origin of natural philosophy, insofar as the sublimation or importance of the sign 'implies a homogeneous ideal substance distinct from the metal in which the sign is expressed.'[11] This notion of ideal substance, in turn, is projected back onto the cosmos, in the sense that the many particulars of the world all emerge from one (ideal) substance at the root of all things.[12] Thus, similar to Seaford's predecessors, projection of ideological principles or even theoretical frameworks originates in an abstraction from ancient coins, not from accessing transcendental forms or through synthetic *a priori* categories of the mind, or anything beyond the confines of the historically-evolving material world and our historically-conditioned knowledge of that world. Hence, coinage is the innovation responsible for the birth of philosophy, and Seaford, like his predecessors, is explaining the world from the world.[13]

But what exactly is philosophy, according to Seaford? His focus is on what he considers the counter-intuitive idea of a single substance to account for the manifold world of appearances, and by promoting this idea, the Greeks developed the discipline of metaphysics as that which conceives of 'the universe as an intelligible order subject to the uniformity of impersonal power.'[14] As it is characterized by Seaford, Presocratic philosophy is thoroughly within the confines of the Aristotelian conception of the origin of philosophy, and more specifically as it is interpreted by thinkers such as Hegel and Nietzsche (and perhaps, originally, Theophrastus)—controversial yet highly influential interpretations that we will discuss at length in the next

[9] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 6. Cf. also ibid., 136. No mention of the religious use-value of coinage is made, even though, as votive objects, coinage was used in this context apparently from the start.
[10] Ibid., 149. Coinage here is akin to Sohn-Rethel's 'abstract thing,' and the 'absolute abstract equivalence' is akin to Marx's *gemeinschaftliche Substanz.* Both Seaford and Sohn-Rethel seemingly follow Marx, who claimed, 'symbolic money can replace the real, because material money as a mere medium of exchange is itself symbolic,' (K. Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie,* trans. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 212) as quoted by Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 6, note 27.
[11] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 136.
[12] Ibid., 136, 175ff.
[13] Ibid., 136, 146.
[14] Ibid., 175.

chapter and later in the book.[15] This rather precise interpretation of philosophy is no doubt accounted for by the fact that Seaford's primary Presocratic exemplar is Anaximander and his identification of the *ἄπειρον* as the *ἀρχή*, which stems from Aristotle and Simplicius' later *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* (24, line 13ff=DK 12 A 9 and B 1). Simplicius' work contains the only surviving fragment of Anaximander (italicized below):

> Of those who say that [the first principle] is one and moving and indefinite, Anaximander, son of Praxiades, a Milesian who became successor and pupil to Thales, said that the indefinite is both principle and element of the things that are, and he was the first to introduce this name of the principle. He says that it is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements, but some other indefinite nature, from which come to be all the heavens and the worlds in them; *and those things, from which there is coming-to-be for the things that are, are also those into which is their passing-away, in accordance with what must be. For they give penalty and recompense to one another for their injustice in accordance with the ordering of time*—speaking of them in rather poetical terms. It is clear that having seen the change of the four elements into each other, he did not think it fit to make some one of these underlying subject, but something else, apart from these.[16]

In this account, we see that the *ἄπειρον* is positioned as the originating and final principle of all things, unlimited/indefinite, always moving, and not reducible to the other elements but instead accounting for them. More, Anaximander's use of 'penalty and recompense' certainly bodes well for Seaford's position that coinage influenced the first philosophers, since the fragment contains language of exchange. For Seaford, Anaximander serves as the paradigmatic example of Presocratic metaphysics, and by starting his analysis with him, the discussion of the 'origin of philosophy' therefore becomes a discussion of metaphysics largely as envisioned by Aristotle and perhaps supported by Theophrastus.[17] Indeed, Seaford's reduction of Thales to the Aristotelian idea of monistic material philosopher is reinforced in his later writing, in which he ignores virtually all contemporary discussion of the original philosopher.[18] Hence, Seaford has defined philosophy as metaphysical cosmology, at least in its initial iteration. We'll return to why this is problematic in terms of Presocratic philosophy quite generally after reviewing Seaford's main argument.

The Money-Ἄπειρον Comparison

In a manner similar to Thomson's analysis of Parmenidean being, Seaford offers a ten-fold scheme comparing the characteristics of the *ἄπειρον* to coined money, and this is his primary justification for attaching the origin of philosophy to the introduction of coined money.[19] Essentially, because there is a remarkable parallel between coinage and the *ἄπειρον* and coined

[15] Hegel was the first modern commentator to characterize Thales as promoting a metaphysical monism. Aristotle, however, merely called Thales the 'founder' of this 'type' of material philosophy in which he identified a material as the *ἀρχή*. For discussion, see Chapter 3, and in particular the coverage of Jaap Mansfeld, Aristotle and Others on Thales, or the Beginnings of Natural Philosophy (With Some Remarks on Xenophanes), *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, Vol. 38, Fasc.1/2 (1985).

[16] Translation P.Curd, from *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available online: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/presocratics/ (accessed Winter 2018).

[17] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 123ff.

[18] Seaford, *The Origins of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and Ancient India,* 236ff.

[19] Seaford will dismiss the political explanation precisely because it does not account for the similarity between money and the *ἄπειρον*. See Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* Chapter 10.

money came first, Seaford insists there must be a causal relation, though exactly how the transformation from money to *ἄπειρον* occurs is unclear.[20] In this section I will present the ten-fold scheme along with a justification that water also meets each of Seaford's categories, since Seaford himself agrees that water meets the first eight. (The fact that water meets the criteria will be important in the later criticism of Seaford's theory presented in the final section of this chapter, but the evidence/rationale is included here for the sake of conciseness).

The first component is the idea that money and the *ἄπειρον* are distinct from all other things.[21] For money, it is unique in its power as a means of exchange, rapidly expanding all over the Greek world from the moment of its inception: 'The power of Greek metal money to obtain so many things, together with its ease of storage, of concealment, and of deployment...set it apart from everything else.'[22] Likewise, in terms of the *ἄπειρον*, following the classic Aristotelian view, the *ἀρχή* is the ultimate principle that accounts for all other things (whatever the nuances), thus is distinct from such things and holds a special place in the cosmos.[23] Of course, the same holds true for *ὕδωρ* insofar as it occupies the role of *ἀρχή*.[24] If water is that from which everything emerges, it is distinct and unlike all other things by virtue of its originating position.

All that being said, Seaford claims that money and the *ἄπειρον* contain all things.[25] In the realm of exchange, he claims the value of money is 'irreconcilably both one and many—depending on whether it is viewed as a single entity or as embodied in various goods.'[26] Essentially, all goods can be construed via their monetary value, hence money 'contains' them. The notion of containing all things is also intimately related to Seaford's later characterization of money as a universal aim and means, and its homogenizing power over goods and users.[27] For the *ἄπειρον*, because it is the origin of all things and that to which all things return, it too contains all things, as a reservoir from which and to which all things emerge and return, respectively.[28] Likewise, if we conceive of *ὕδωρ* as the primordial waters from which everything emerges and to which everything returns,[29] it 'contains' all things in the very same sense (hence for Thales, the earth rests on water, i.e., it is contained by water).[30]

In Seaford's worldview, money and the *ἄπειρον* also precede and persist beyond everything else. For money, 'it must precede—and be envisaged by its recipient as persisting unchanged beyond—any transaction involving it.'[31] In other words, in order for money to operate as a universal medium of exchange, it must be perceived as containing a value that is consistent

[20] Joshua Reynolds, Review of *Money and the Early Greek Mind: Homer, Philosophy, Tragedy,* in *NDPR* (2004.11.02). Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 11, note 37, cites Sierksma for those interested in a 'psychological or anthropological account of the mechanism of projection.' See F. Sierksma, *Projection and Religion, an Anthropological and Psychological Account of the Phenomenon of Projection,* Trans. Johan Faber (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990).
[21] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 205.
[22] Ibid., 172.
[23] Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 24, line 13ff=DK 12 A 9 and B 1.
[24] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 205, note 81.
[25] Ibid., 206.
[26] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 205.
[27] Discussed below, but see ibid., 206.
[28] Ibid.
[29] There are those who believe Thales presented water as a constitutive cause (cf. the assessment of O'Grady in Chapters 3 and 7, below), and those who believe it was a more qualified, 'reservoir' monism. For the latter, see R. Barney, History and Dialectic in *Metaphysics* A 3, in *Aristotle's Metaphysics Alpha*, edited by Carlos Steel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 85ff.
[30] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.3.983b20ff.
[31] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 206.

before, during, and after the transaction. This is certainly true of coined money, whether or not we accept the argument that fiduciarity is the most salient characteristic of the earliest coins.[32] In terms of the *ἄπειρον,* here too it is the role of the *ἀρχή* as originating and final principle that means it precedes and persists beyond all things.[33] (And again the same holds true for *ὕδωρ* as *ἀρχή*).[34]

One category that is a bit more nuanced is the idea money and the *ἄπειρον* are in a state of eternal motion. Regarding money, what Seaford means is that its identity remains the same—it has 'eternal' value in the sense listed above by preceding and persisting through transactions, but it is also always moving in the sense that commodities are constantly being exchanged using money. Thus money, as the universal medium of exchange and that which 'contains all things,' is also always in motion.[35] In terms of the *ἄπειρον*, there are several passages that attest to the fact that Anaximander characterized the *ἄπειρον* as eternally moving, though there is still some dispute.[36] Theophrastus is allegedly the main source, who influenced Simplicius (*Phys.*, 1121, 5): '...Anaximander and Leucippus and Democritus...and they said that motion was eternal....'[37] Aristotle's report also appears to assign eternal motion to Anaximander, but without naming him outright:

Aristotle, *Physics*, Θ I, 250b 11:

> Did motion come into being at some time...or did it neither come-to-be nor is it destroyed, but did it always exist and will it go on for ever, and is it immortal and unceasing for existing things, being like a kind of life for all natural objects?...But all who say that there are infinite worlds, and that some of them are coming-to-be and others passing away, say that motion always exists...while all who say that there is one world, whether eternal or not, make analogous supposition about motion.[38]

According to KRS,[39] the use of *ἀθάνατον καὶ ἄπαυστον* suggests that Aristotle had him in mind, lending credence to Theophrastus' and Simplicius' characterizations.[40] It therefore seems safe to attribute eternal motion to Anaximander's conception of the *ἄπειρον*. And, for that matter, eternal motion surely applies to *ὕδωρ* in its role as *ἀρχή* as well—Seaford himself admits, 'for most water in the world is in constant motion,' and cites Heraclitus' oft repeated line that all things flow.[41]

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[32] Ibid., 136ff.
[33] Ibid., 206.
[34] Ibid., 205, note 81.
[35] Ibid., 206
[36] For discussion, see Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 123ff, who are skeptical of Theophrastus' influence. Seaford thinks their reservations are not warranted (see Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 192, note 15).
[37] Trans. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 124. Greek: *'...Ἀναξίμανδρον καὶ Λεύκιππον καὶ Δημόκριτον... καὶ τὴν κίνησιν ἀίδιον ἔλεγον...'*
[38] Trans. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 127, of: *πότερον γέγονέ ποτε κίνησις...ἢ οὔτ' ἐγένετο οὔτε φθείρεται ἀλλ' ἀεὶ ἦν καὶ ἀεὶ ἔσται, καὶ τοῦτ' ἀθάνατον καὶ ἄπαυστον ὑπάρχει τοῖς οὖσιν, οἷον ζωή τις οὖσα τοῖς φύσει συνεστῶσι πᾶσιν;... ἀλλ' ὅσοι μὲν ἀπείρους τε κόσμους εἶναί φασι, καὶ τοὺς μὲν γίγνεσθαι τοὺς δὲ φθείρεσθαι τῶν κόσμων, ἀεὶ φασιν εἶναι κίνησιν...ὅσοι δ' ἕνα, <ἢ ἀεὶ > ἢ μὴ ἀεὶ, καὶ περὶ τῆς κίνήσεως ὑποτίθενται κατὰ λόγον.*
[39] Ibid.
[40] Cf. also, Hippolytus, *Ref.* 1.6.2=DK 12 A 11: *πρὸς δὲ τούτῳ κίνησιν ἀίδιον εἶναι, ἐν ᾗ συμβαίνει γίνεσθαι τοὺς οὐρανούς* / 'In addition to this he [Anaximander] said that motion was eternal, in which it results that the heavens come into being.' Trans. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 107.
[41] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 206, note 81. We will discuss the nuances of motion vis-à-vis the panpsychist

Money and the *ἄπειρον* are also said to surround and steer all things in Seaford's account, but this notion is differentiated from its essential quality of preceding and persisting. For money, it is the 'pervasive aim of transactions as well as their measure of value,' and, according to Seaford, 'may seem to regulate all activity.'[42] One important discussion concerns Ares, who in the *Iliad* presides over the battle field exchanging bodies for money, which Seaford claims indicates that even the heroism of battle is trumped by money. [43] Essentially, in this image of Ares we have the idea of money orchestrating all activities, and this is juxtaposed with Achilles' refusal to be bought, a central theme in the *Iliad*. The counter-example of Achilles is reinforced in other works; in fact, Seaford[44] points to Solon's warning,[45] the entire *Electra* of Euripides,[46] and Socrates' refusal of payment for wisdom, which he (Socrates) equates with prostitution.[47] These counter-examples indicate, for Seaford, not that money lacks the quality of being a universal aim, but that it does not always win out. Despite the fact that this might indicate it is not truly universal, Seaford insists money is *envisioned* as utterly pervasive, surrounding and steering all activities, but apparently not in the strictly deterministic sense.

In terms of the *ἄπειρον* surrounding and steering all things, this is an area in which Seaford's analysis reveals a weakness, for he does not discuss the details of the idea. In fact, it is the very nuances of the potential ontological parameters of Presocratic *ἀρχή* where much philosophical questioning resides—if the *ἀρχή* is not a constitutive cause, what is its character and structure in relation to the manifold world of appearances? Despite this shortcoming in Seaford's work, the idea of the *ἀρχή* as an originating, underlying, and final principle, indicates it surrounds all things and orients activity at least teleologically—and again, the same would hold true for *ὕδωρ*, which can easily be construed in terms of the qualified threefold structure of originating, underlying/governing, and final principal.

Despite the pervasive character of money and the *ἄπειρον*, Seaford advocates both are impersonal.[48] In terms of money, the case concerns the impersonal homogeneity of money—because of its faithfulness to type, as opposed to any uniqueness as a precious object, money is homogeneous.[49] Thus, since coins are not unique like talismanic items, they are, taken collectively, impersonal. More, Seaford insists that 'there is nothing about money to enable it to be associated with an individual—save the mere fact of transient possession.'[50] Although this point is straightforwardly disputed by pointing towards early electrum types that feature the very names of individuals who issued them (Figure 2),[51] as a general point concerning the basic character of money the argument makes sense. Money is indeed homogeneous and impersonal as a medium of exchange, even if some issues bear the seal of powerful individuals. In terms

and qualified panpsychist accounts of Thales in Chapter 9. The fragment from Heraclitus reads: 'Upon those that step into the same rivers different and different waters flow…' Heraclitus, *Fr.* 12, Arius Didymus *ap. Eusebium P.E.* xv, 20. See Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 194f, no. 214.

[42] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 206.

[43] Ibid., 158.

[44] Ibid., 162.

[45] Solon, Fr. 24.

[46] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 152ff.

[47] Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.6; Aristophanes, *Wealth* 153-9.

[48] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 152ff.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Much has been written about the type, but for a general discussion, see L. Weidauer, *Probleme der frühen Elekrtonprägung* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1975), 62f, no. 39.

Figure 2: Electrum stater from Ephesos, Ionia, c. late seventh century BC. Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC. Triton XXIII, lot 350.

of the *ἄπειρον*, this too could be construed as impersonal because a metaphysical cosmology based on a material principle is an objective, impersonal account of the universe, based on theoretical principles rather than 'personal' divinity[52] (again, following the Aristotelian conception).[53] Interestingly, Seaford claims that *ὕδωρ* may have been both personal and impersonal—impersonal in that it surrounds everything, but personal insofar as Thales said everything is 'full of gods.'[54]

Money and the *ἄπειρον* are also envisaged as unlimited in Seaford's analysis.[55] Clearly, the *ἄπειρον* is unlimited, since that is what '*ἄ-πειρον*' literally translates to, '*α*' being the negative attached to *πειρον*, the root of which is *πέρᾶς*, meaning 'an end, limit, boundary.'[56] In terms of money, the case is slightly more nuanced. On the one hand, money is unlimited in terms of its function as a medium of exchange. As Seaford puts it: 'It is the *essence* of money therefore to be in permanent (unlimited) circulation, in which any periods of storage are mere intervals.'[57] (italics mine) On the other hand, the desire for money, according to Seaford (and many of the Greeks) is also unlimited. Here Seaford points to Anaximander's contemporary, Solon, who recognized the threat of the unlimited accumulation of money.[58] We might also follow Thomson and point to the aforementioned story of Midas, among several others. Ultimately, the point is that 'when precious metal acquires...the power to obtain things unlimited in quantity and kind...the desire for it also becomes unlimited.'[59] Essentially, for Seaford, money is unlimited in the abstract sense (as universal aim and means, and unlimited in circulation)[60] but also envisioned as unlimited because it can obtain anything, hence it incorporates all desires.[61] In

[52] Personal, meaning anthropomorphic divinities of a pantheon, rather than a 'divine' substance.
[53] See Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 206, especially note 82.
[54] Ibid. We'll discuss the significance of the 'personal' quality of water in Chapters 9, 11, and 12.
[55] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 206.
[56] H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H.S. Jones, and R. McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Second Edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), s.v. *πέρᾶς*.
[57] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 166. Interesting choice of words for Seaford.
[58] Solon, Fr.4.5-18, 13.71-3 (as cited by Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 206, note 83).
[59] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 165.
[60] Ibid., 168.
[61] Ibid., 169.

terms of *ὕδωρ*, we learn from Simplicius (*Phys.* 458.23) that Thales envisioned it as *ἄπειρον*,[62] and Seaford himself provides additional evidence.[63] Panchenko's commentary, discussed below, also indicates that Thales' *ὕδωρ* was constantly replenished since *ὕδωρ* is the final principle, and that means it is unlimited since it can never be exhausted.[64]

Another key characteristic that we have already touched upon is the idea that both money and the *ἄπειρον* are internally undifferentiated, or homogeneous.[65] Seaford makes the exceptional point that money and prestige objects differ significantly here. On the one hand, he mentions the bowl of Hephaestus and Odysseus' bow.[66] Those objects are valuable precisely for their uniqueness. Money, however, is entirely different:

> Whereas the power of the talismanic object derives from its uniqueness, the power of money derives from its *homogeneity* as the embodiment of the absolute abstract equivalence between commodities imposed by exchange. And so the seal-mark, which derives its power from the uniqueness of the talismanic seal, is at the opposite pole (despite obvious similarities) from the coin-mark, which assimilates a piece of metal to all other such pieces.[67]

Indeed, as Seaford goes on to explain, precious metal is valuable insofar as it resembles other precious metals (despite his emphasis on fiduciarity), and as such it has the quality of homogeneity.[68] On top of this, and stemming from the homogeneous nature of coinage, Seaford argues, convincingly, that money homogenizes goods insofar as they are 'equalized' as commodities,[69] just as Marx pointed out in his assessment of human labor in the abstract (recall the differentiation between Aristotle and Marx on this point). Interestingly, Seaford does not cite Marx's assessment and instead points to slightly later passages from Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1133b16-18 and 1133a17-21), that employ the same verb, *ἰσασθῆναι* (*isasthênai* / equalize). In any case, in its role as equalizer money is said to homogenize things. Certainly, the *ἄπειρον* is also not internally differentiated, since all things are reduced to it and accounted for by it, and it is therefore not reducible to anything else. Naturally, in its role as *ἀρχή*, *ὕδωρ* would fulfill this same category.[70]

There are two final categories concerning money and the *ἄπειρον*, and Seaford believes that these two categories might not hold true for water.[71] First is the idea that both money and the *ἄπειρον* are 'imperceptible' but also visible.[72] This means that money is invisible in the abstract sense of exchange value but at the same time, as a physical medium of exchange, coinage is utterly concrete and visible. In terms of the *ἄπειρον,* the case is similar. Construed

[62] Ibid., 206, note 82.
[63] Cf. e.g., Ibid., 150, 166.
[64] D. Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning* (Athens: Eurasia, 2005), 8-9. (Published in Greek, but English translation is available online at http://artesliberales.spbu.ru/contacts-ru/publications/d_panchenko/d_panchenko_1).
[65] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 207.
[66] Ibid., 149.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 150, 152.
[70] Ibid., 206, note 82.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., 207.

as the constitutive principle of all things it is in some sense visible as everything—yet it is not visible in itself.[73] No one can point to the *ἄπειρον*, it is only to be grasped by the mind.[74] The second category that potentially bars inclusion of water is the idea that both money and the *ἄπειρον* unite opposites.[75] This is purportedly true of money because by nature it mediates between opposing parties (loosely construed as agents participating in an act of exchange).[76] Thus, users of coinage also become homogenized in Seaford's view.[77] In terms of the *ἄπειρον*, it unites opposites by virtue of the fact that the elements, like fire and water, are reducible to it, and it stands outside of them, as per Simplicius: *ἀλλά τι ἄλλο παρὰ ταῦτα* / 'but something else besides these.'[78]

But wouldn't water also possess these qualities? Regarding the first category, water is both visible and invisible by virtue of the fact that it is a transparent substance—I can see through water yet at the same time I can see it. More, in its workings within things it is invisible (like *ἄπειρον*) yet at the same time it is truly visible all over the world—for many of the Greeks the earth was literally surrounded by water. So it seems that water would fulfill this category, at least at the same level of stringency as Seaford's argumentation. Second, water unites opposites in two senses. First, it is binary. The same water that irrigates crops can flood them, after all. As Rabun Taylor aptly summarizes, 'Water—particularly in its earthbound, chthonic manifestations—carries powerful intimations of fertility and increase. The same element can be a force of death and destruction. Its symbolism is interesting precisely because it is binary. Water is life and death. It nurtures and it kills; it strengthens and it enfeebles.' [79] Secondly, water changes form, transitioning from solid to gas, and therefore takes on opposite physical states. Thus, water appears to meet the final categories of the money- *ἄπειρον* scheme, a possibility which Seaford does not outright deny, but chooses to leave aside to focus on the seemingly more well-attested evidence concerning Anaximander.

In any event, as a result of the truly remarkable parallel between money and the *ἄπειρον*, Seaford proposes a causal relationship between coined money and philosophy, and insists that the monetization of Greek society was the essential characteristic that differentiated the situation of the Greeks from all other ancient cultures—thereby enabling the so-called Greek miracle.[80] For Seaford, the similarity between money and the *ἄπειρον* is no trivial analogy; it reflects a fundamentally real influence. As he explains, 'Presocratic metaphysics involves (without *consisting of*) unconscious cosmological projection of the universal power and universal exchangeability of the abstract substance of money.'[81] Unfortunately, exactly what occurs in the mind during the exchange of coined money that results in metaphysical cosmology is not really discussed in his original work. Seaford mentions, in an examination of Heraclitus and the *λόγος* of money, that the cognitive activity of agents during an exchange is a

[73] It seems that Seaford might commit Anaximander to the idea of *ἀρχή* as constitutive cause here, following perhaps Theophrastus. See Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 123ff.
[74] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 207.
[75] Ibid., 207.
[76] Ibid., 207.
[77] Ibid., 151ff.
[78] Simplicius, *in Phy* 24, 13= DK 12A9 (BI). Trans. Seaford, *op. cit.*
[79] R. Taylor, River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity, in *The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing, and Hygiene from Antiquity through the Renaissance*, edited by Cynthia Kosso and Anne Scott (Leiden: Brill, 2009): 21-22.
[80] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind, passim*.
[81] Ibid., 11.

'paradox,' and here he cites Sohn-Rethel's use of the term 'solipsism.'[82] But that is all we get in terms of a direct assessment, and it amounts to a big question mark at the heart of the analysis.

The Individual Subject

In his later work, most notably 'Money and the Genesis of the Western Subject,' Seaford attempts to address this ambiguity in his theory, arguing that money 'simultaneously promotes the isolated autonomy of the individual and provides a model (the unification of diversity by semi-abstract substance) that shapes both the unity of individual consciousness and the presocratic conception of the cosmos as constituted by a single semi-abstract substance.'[83] His use of 'promotes' and 'shapes' clearly positions coinage in a fundamentally causal role to the emergence of consciousness itself. The proverbial gloves are therefore off at this point—no longer is Seaford distancing the underlying reality from the debate. For Seaford, human beings do not by nature possess a unified individual consciousness.[84] This viewpoint is not new, of course. It is essentially the very same view espoused by Marx, Thomson, and Sohn-Rethel, namely, that human self-consciousness is really 'false consciousness,' the only difference being that Seaford offers a chronological development of the notion of soul from Homer to Plato.[85] In *The Origins of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and Ancient India,* Seaford summarizes and reinforces his case: there he looks to India to draw another (admittedly brilliant) comparison, claiming that in both societies (Greek and Indian) the process of monetization caused the projection of metaphysics onto the cosmos and the emergence of the notion of a unified individual self.[86]

The problem with this approach is that it discounts the idea that our philosophical language simply became increasingly sophisticated as our understanding of ourselves as unique, conscious individuals existing in nature developed through time. So what about consciousness, then? Is there some indication that individuals possessed unified consciousness before coinage? As many have pointed out,[87] there is evidence that Homer had a fairly sophisticated understanding of the autonomy and individuality of human self-consciousness, even if there was no clearly delineated word for it. The very first lines of Homer's two works provide what I consider ample evidence of this fact:

Homer, *Iliad,* 1.1:

> *μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος*

[82] Ibid., 238, note 49, citing Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour*, 42-3.
[83] Seaford, Monetization and the Genesis of the Western Subject, 1.
[84] For a recent theory of consciousness from the discipline of neuroscience, which argues that the unity of self-consciousness is innate to the human mind and exists within the electromagnetic field within and surrounding the physical brain, see Johnjoe McFadden, Integrating information in the brain's EM field: the cemi field theory of consciousness, *Neuroscience of Consciousness* Volume 2020, Issue 1 (2020): 1-13.
[85] Ibid., 5ff, 18ff.
[86] Like his 2004 work, the argument is well documented, complex, and compelling, but I will not dispute the finer details here. In terms of philosophical schools of thought, he is mostly interested with the Upanishads, in which the idea of a unified cosmos (similar to that of Parmenides) and unified self (similar to Plato's soul) is expressed, and this appears to have occurred just after coinage in India.
[87] See R. W. Sharples, 'But Why Has My Spirit Spoken with me Thus?' Homeric Decision-Making, *Greece and Rome* 30 (1983): 1-7; D.S. Sullivan, *Psychological Activity in Homer: A Study of Phrēn* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988), 6; B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 21-26; R. Gaskin, Do Homeric Heroes Make Real Decisions?, *Classical Quarterly* 40, 1 (1990): 1-15; contra E. Jeremiah, *The Emergence of Reflexivity in Greek Language and Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 11-15; Seaford, *The Origin of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and Ancient India*, 54f.

> Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles son of Peleus[88]

Homer, *Odyssey,* 1.1:

> *ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον*
>
> Tell me, O Muse, of that many-sided hero[89]

Here we see what constitutes a basic Homeric anthropology set out in the first lines of his great epics: human beings have a moral compass and are ingenious, which presupposes a unified self. The first example, from the *Iliad,* expresses the idea that human beings are perfectly capable of feeling indignant, as indicated by Achilles' wrath (*μῆνιν / mênin*). How could one feel as though one has been treated unjustly if there is no unified conscious subject to possess these feelings? Seaford himself claims the crisis of just reciprocity is at the heart of the *Iliad*, thus his dismissal seems unwarranted based on his own literary analysis. The second example, from the *Odyssey*, encompasses the idea that humans exhibit wisdom and ingenuity to solve complex problems, as exhibited in the many travels and exploits of Odysseus (*πολύτροπον / polýtropon* meaning, figuratively, 'adaptable'). The very application of one's intellect to solve complex problems demonstrates that the individual exercising such powers is really truly an individual with a unified consciousness. Both examples therefore presuppose a static, self-aware individual existing in historical time.

Of course, Homer does not offer an articulate delineation of the concept of *ψυχή* (*psychê*) or *αὐτός* (*autós*); he was not concerned exclusively with *ψυχή* 'as such.' Seaford focuses his criticism on this point exclusively, arguing that, 'where there is no word for the concept, this is either because there is no concept, or because the concept is merely incipient...'[90] That reasoning is perfectly fine—the problem is, Seaford extends the lack of concept to apply to the underlying reality. Concerning Snell's work on the discovery of the Greek mind he writes: 'Critics of Snell do not attempt to explain the absence [of the concept] because...they tend to assume that our unitary entity of consciousness is universal, and so regard its absence from Homeric (and Hesiodic) language as relatively insignificant and undeserving of explanation.' But is this 'assumption'—essentially, that we are conscious, thinking beings—truly a bold maneuver? Just because humans had not discovered the laws of gravity in archaic Greece does not mean such a force did not exist, after all.

Ultimately, in a manner similar to Thomson and in near-perfect Marxian form, Seaford carefully avoids the underlying ontological and epistemological questions altogether and focuses exclusively on explaining the world from the world. (His argument is known in philosophy as an IBE argument: inference to the best explanation). And even though Seaford recognizes that ancient coins are not the only influence on philosophy,[91] his argument insists that without coinage, Presocratic metaphysics could not have occurred and the phenomenon of a unified, conscious experience would not exist.

[88] Trans. Samuel Butler, *The Iliad of Homer* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898).
[89] Trans. Samuel Butler, *The Odyssey.* Revised by Timothy Power and Gregory Nagy (London: A. C. Fifield, 1900).
[90] Seaford, *The Origin of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and Ancient India,* 55.
[91] Seaford acknowledges the importance of politics in relation to the origin of philosophy, but claims that it is an insufficient explanation because it does not explain all the features of the *ἄπειρον*.

Problems with Seaford's Account

Although I have pointed out some of the issues with Seaford's theory throughout this chapter, I'd like now to turn to some more poignant critiques. The first review of Seaford's work was done by Joshua Reynolds where he pointed out several issues, two of which I deem extremely important.[92] The first is that, 'early money users must have been aware of the distinction between sign and substance in order to trust the value of coins.' [93] In other words, the idea of a universal, homogeneous source of value must have preceded the invention of coinage, else coinage would never have been invented. This issue is not explained by Seaford's impressive description of the gradual emergence from sacrificial meat and votive objects to coins.[94] If the fiduciary nature of coinage is to be upheld (something Seaford maintains), then the creators and users of the first coins must have been aware of their redeemability and thus the difference the sign made to the metal before it was struck. In other words, the creator of coinage must first have had the idea for coinage. Where did that idea come from? The exchange of commodities and intuitive notion of abstract human labor à la Marx is the indication from the opening of Seaford's work,[95] but, again, the philosophical presuppositions involved in this view are entirely ignored because Seaford is explaining the world from the world. [96] But one could just as easily suggest transcendental forms as an explanation as the source of knowledge and value. And because Seaford does not consider the philosophical objections—Plato's theory of recollection,[97] for instance—his theory stands on the rather unsteady, implicit premise of the explanatory reliability of historical materialism to explain all things.[98]

The second major critique offered by Reynolds concerns the actual mechanism for projection. He pointed out that Seaford's coinage- *ἄπειρον* parallel does not explain the actual cognitive processes at work whereby the 'ideal substance' metamorphosizes into a philosophical cosmology, aside from use of terms like 'projection.'[99] So, for instance, does the faculty of imagination play a role, and how so? More, just because there appears to be a parallel between coinage and the later *ἄπειρον*, does that mean there is a causal connection if we are unsure how the move from absorbing the 'ideal substance' to projecting it onto the cosmos occurs? As Reynolds pointed out, this mechanism is just as important to the theory as the prioritization of coinage.[100] This is a fair critique. The question we can now ask is, did Seaford's later works solve this problem? The answer is no. Now, instead of explaining the mechanism for projection, Seaford argues that the mechanism itself is reducible to the introjection of the value of coined money. Is the idea of a unitary self really the result of coinage? I believe the above analysis of Homeric anthropology suffices to answer this question in the negative, or, at the very least,

[92] Reynolds, Review of Richard Seaford.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind,* 75ff.
[95] Ibid., 1.
[96] Ibid., 1, note 1.
[97] Plato, *Phaedrus* 73a-77a.
[98] Cf. Alberto Bernabé, El Dinero y los Presocráticos, 11. (Unpublished essay, scheduled to be read at the Seventh Biennial Conference of the IAPS, but delayed due to the 2020 coronavirus pandemic). He writes 'the evolution of thought to a more abstract way of conceiving things opens the way to a set of new realities, which would include philosophy, scientific geography, history, written legality and the rationalization of money, but not vice versa.' Uncertain translation—perhaps mine.
[99] Reynolds, Review of Richard Seaford.
[100] Ibid.

call Seaford's view into question. Add to that Reynold's other critique, which boils down to the fact that someone had to invent coinage, and the case against Seaford has significant merit.

In addition to these two important critiques we can offer the following: if water meets all the criteria of the coinage- *ἄπειρον* scheme, does that mean we have no need for coinage as the source of influence? In other words, could the idea of an ideal substance come from water instead? In this case, water could serve as the unconscious motivator in the development of the idea of an ideal substance, complemented by the contemporary mythic and religious views about aquatic deities. Seaford would argue that many cultures had such mythological figures but only in the Greek world do we find philosophy (impersonal metaphysical cosmology), and the essential difference between the Greeks and other ancient cultures was the advent of coined money. Fair enough. For my part, I offer the rest of this book, another IBE argument, which consists of an exhibition and discussion of the influence of a very specific tradition, that of Acheloios. It is not simply a dialectical counterargument, but, rather, as I hope to show, a more reasonable and accurate assessment that explains Thales' conscious thought process—something the Neo-Marxians neglect to do. As we will see, understanding what Thales' was thinking will give us a more accurate understanding of philosophy proper while still accounting for the advent of metaphysical cosmology.

Another salient problem with Seaford's account is that it relies almost entirely upon Aristotle's problematic framing of the origin of philosophy.[101] W.K.C. Gurthrie summarized the problems in Aristotle's account from the *Metaphysics*, pointing out that virtually all of the key terms Aristotle uses to describe the philosophical *ἀρχή* are anachronistically applied to an older tradition. As Guthrie puts it, the framing of the Milesians is 'set forth in the abundant philosophical terminology of a later age.'[102] The most relevant section from Aristotle is reproduced below.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b6ff:

> Most of the earliest philosophers thought that the principles which were in the nature of matter were the only principles of all things: that of which all things consist, and from which they first come to be and into which they are resolved as a final state (the substance remaining but changing in its modifications), this, they said, is the element and principle of all things, and therefore they think that nothing is either generated or destroyed, since this sort of entity is always preserved, as we say that Socrates neither comes to be absolutely when he comes to be beautiful or musical, nor ceases to be when he loses these characteristics, because the substratum, Socrates himself, remains. So it is, they say, with everything else: there is always some permanent substance, or nature, either one or more, which is conserved in the generation of the rest from it.[103]

The words used here, specifically *οὐσία* (*ousía* / substance), *πάθος* (*páthos* / attribute), *ἁπλῶς* (*haplôs* / absolute coming-to-be), *ὑποκείμενον* (*hypokeímenon* / substratum), and most

[101] Cf. e.g., Bruno Snell, Die Nachrichten über die Lehren des Thales und die Anfänge der griechischen Philosophie- und Literaturgeschichte, *Philologus*, 96 (1944): 170-82; W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy.* Volume 1: *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans* (Cambridge: UP, 1979), 54ff; Michael Frede, Aristotle's Account of the Origin of Philosophy, *Rhizai* 1 (2004): 9-44; Tell Håkan, *Plato's Counterfeit Sophist*. Hellenic Studies Series 44 (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2011), Introduction.
[102] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy,* 56.
[103] Trans. Guthrie, *op. cit.*

importantly *στοιχεῖον* (*stoicheîon* / element), were not in use in Archaic Ionia, and therefore the articulation of the *ἀρχή* might not have been so refined.[104] As Guthrie emphasizes in his account, it took years of dialogue, exchange, and speculation for this language to fully emerge.[105] Thus, Aristotle's account as traditionally interpreted must be considered vis-à-vis the doxographic tradition, which reveals a different conception of *ἀρχή* (as I'll show in due course) from the metaphysics or 'philosophical cosmology' identified as its primary characteristic by Seaford.[106]

Ultimately, if Seaford's understanding of Anaximander and the origin of philosophy is based on an account that employs terminology not available to Thales, a significant portion of his evidence is problematic and therefore the entire theory opens up to additional criticism. How sure can we be about the relation of coinage to philosophy if our understanding of the latter is based on a seemingly misleading account? Essentially, by accepting the unqualified Aristotelian account we define philosophy in such a way that lends credence to the idea that coinage prompted philosophy, hence the causal relation can be established and, ultimately, the methodological postulate of dialectical materialism and theory of exchange abstraction gain the upper hand over fundamentally real abstract forms accessed via beatific vision (or some other means). That, in essence, seems to be what is at stake in accepting Seaford's view—all fundamentally real transcendental reality—including God and the immaterial soul.

Finally, the most significant problem in Seaford's works is that he almost entirely ignores Thales, whom many consider the first philosopher. Can we really explain the origin of Presocratic philosophy if we largely overlook Thales? Seaford does not see this as an issue, surmising that Thales seemingly represented an early, not fully-developed predecessor to philosophy proper (i.e. metaphysics).[107] However, we have to balance Seaford's version of a 'gradual' emergence to a more refined system with the fact that he also claims he is concerned with the 'genesis and form of their [Presocratics] metaphysical outlook,'[108] and that 'the question of whether ancient philosophy thereafter emancipated itself from socially determined preconceptions is a question beyond the scope of this book.'[109] These statements indicate that, for Seaford, philosophy was from the start the presentation of metaphysical cosmology. Ultimately, while the notion of a gradual emergence of philosophy is of course true to some degree (cf. Chpt.7), I believe we can get closer to an understanding of the origin and essence of philosophy by getting closer to Thales—in effect, redefining philosophy as a love of wisdom. Thus, we now turn to Thales; for it is through a thorough and proper reexamination of Thales that we can, ultimately, transcend the confines of dialectical materialism.

[104] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy,* 56*;* Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 7-9; Frede, Aristotle's Account of the Origin of Philosophy, 9-44; Alberto Bernabé, The Primordial Water: Between Myth and Philosophy, in *More Than Homer Knew: Studies on Homer and His Ancient Commentators in Honor of Franco Montanari* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020): 425.
[105] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy,* 56.
[106] Evidence can be found below in Chapter 3, concerning Thales.
[107] Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, 206.
[108] Ibid., 12.
[109] Ibid., 12, note 39.

Chapter 3

Thales' Principle: A Provisional Assessment

'Shall we describe those that belong to our band?'

-Socrates[1]

When I was first introduced to Thales many years ago the situation was presented as though we couldn't really know much about him, and all that we have that is anywhere close to reliable comes from Aristotle. Not only have I come to the conclusion that that position is entirely false, I've also come to believe that the question of Thales is the most important question in contemporary philosophy. Truth be told, there have been many varying accounts of Thales' contribution to philosophy throughout antiquity, and in particular his view of the *ἀρχή*.[2] In early Christian descriptions, for instance, Thales did not posit water as a constitutive cause—i.e. a strict material monism in which all things are water in the most fundamental sense, which one might assume based on Aristotle's account.[3] Instead, we are presented with much more nuanced descriptions: Irenaus of Lyon claimed Thales positioned water as the origin and beginning of all things (*generationem et initium*);[4] Athenagoras the Apologist claimed Thales distinguished between god, daimons, and heroes, and that god was the intellect that shaped the cosmos[5] (here he presumably followed Cicero);[6] Clement of Alexandria likewise records that Thales said water was the first cause (*πρώτην αἰτίαν / prṓtēn aitían*), but mentions nothing that could be construed as advocating a constitutive cause.[7] As late as the 7th century AD, Isidore of Seville claimed Thales 'understood God in a spiritual way, as mind,' which is seemingly incompatible with the idea of an impersonal cosmos reducible to water.[8] But ever since the Ancient and Medieval Christian tradition lost favor in Europe, a particular reading of Aristotle's account of Thales in the *Metaphysics* has had a profound impact on our understanding of the history of western philosophy. In this reading, which appears to have originated with Hegel (but even more solidified by his later critics), [9] all reality was seen as

[1] Plato, *Theaetetus* 173b, trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*
[2] For a corpus of all ancient writings that mention Thales, see the phenomenal work by Goerg Wöhrle and Richard McKirahan: G. Wöhrle (ed.), *The Milesians: Thales,* translation and additional material by Richard McKirahan, *Traditio Praesocratica Volume 1* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).
[3] For an excellent overview of the history of Thales in Christian literature see Andreas Schwab, *Thales von Milets in der frühen christlichen Literature: Dartstellungen seiner Figur und seiner Ideen in den griechischen und lateinischen Textzeugnissen christlicher Autoren Kaiserzeit und Spätantike* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).
[4] Irenaus of Lyon, *Adversus* 2.14.2 (ed. Box=Th 145).
[5] Athenagoras the Apologist, *Legatio pro Christianis* 23.2 (ed. Marcovich=Th 186).
[6] Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.25-1.26 (ed. Pease=Th 72)
[7] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 2.4.14.1-2 (Th 206),
[8] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 8.6.18 (ed. Lindsay=Th 475).
[9] Mansfeld, Aristotle and Others on Thales, or the Beginnings of Natural Philosophy (With Some Remarks on Xenophanes), 109-110, note 1. As Hegel writes, 'The proposition of Thales, that water is the Absolute...is the beginning of Philosophy, because with it the consciousness is arrived at that essence, truth, that which is alone in and of itself, are one.' (G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* , Bd. I, ed. K.L. Michelet, Jub.-Ausg. Bd. 17 (Stuttgart, 1959), 219, trans. K.Algra, The beginnings of cosmology, in *Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy,* ed. A.A. Long (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 65). As Mansfeld points out, this interpretation has been very influential. Nietzsche, also cited by Mansfeld, would comment that 'water is the origin and womb of all things, because in it, though only in the state of pupation, the thought is contained that "all is one."' (F. Nietzsche, *Die Philosophie*

one substance, in the sense that everything was reducible to a single material element that explained the manifold world of appearances; and for Thales, it was water. But as we saw in the last Chapter, the account in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is problematic (at the very least) because it uses anachronistic terminology when describing the basic character of the *ἀρχή*,[10] and therefore might give us an inaccurate picture of Thales' conceptual scheme. When we consider this in light of the genuinely different accounts of Thales given by other commentators throughout antiquity, a reassessment of Aristotle's account of Thales is surely in order.

In this chapter we therefore have the difficult and, indeed, somewhat tedious task of determining what can be trusted from Aristotle's account, and what acceptance of some portions and rejection of others means in terms of Thales' overall worldview. To do this, we will examine key passages from Aristotle and how they have been interpreted by various contemporary scholars. Here we will see that there are widely divergent views—on the one hand, some continue to maintain that Thales posited water as a constitutive cause (thus a threefold principle à la the 'customary' Aristotelian view).[11] This view is best captured in one of the two relatively recent monographs on Thales—Patricia O'Grady's *Thales of Miletus: The beginnings of western science and philosophy*, unquestionably the least accurate assessment I have encountered. On the other hand, some take a more cautious interpretation and suggest Thales' principle was less all-encompassing, and that not all things are made of water, just that things originate from and possibly return to water—and, indeed, *ὕδωρ* is best construed as 'divine water,' not simply 'water.' This view is nicely captured in the other recent monograph on Thales—Dmitri Panchenko's *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning,* an overall good book that I agree with in many, but not all, respects. Within this latter school of thought, which seems to include the Hippian and Stoic traditions but also many other contemporary critics, there are some important differences and we must assess these nuances as well before establishing the general parameters that will guide the rest of the book.

The Ἀρχή

Aristotle's Phraseology and Ἀρχή as Constitutive Principle

With such divergent views of the original philosopher, a close examination of Aristotle's precise wording is our first step toward getting back to authentic Thales. First, in the most essential passage, Aristotle claims that Thales believed *ὕδωρ* was the *ἀρχή* of all things, and some believe that the initial description of *ἀρχή* from the opening paragraph, in which it is described as a constitutive cause, is a framework applicable to all the Presocratics, including Thales:

im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen, *Werke* 3.2, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin, 1973), 306). It is possible that Theophrastus applied an atomist understanding to Thales in antiquity, as he seems to have done with Anaximander. For the role of Theophrastus imposing an atomist worldview on Anaximander, see Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 123ff. But see A. Lebedev, Idealism (Mentalism) in Early Greek Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology: Pythagoras, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Xenophanes and others. With some remarks on the 'Gigantomachia over being' in Plato's Sophistes, *Indo-European Linguistics and Classical Philology—XXIII, Proceedings of the 23rd Conference in Memory of Professor Joseph M. Tronsky, June 24–26, 2019* (Санкт Петербург, Наука, 2019), 651-704, in which he argues that the 19th century positivist scholars responding to Hegel's spiritualism are more at fault for this conception of a pure materialism among the Presocratics.

[10] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy,* 56.

[11] I put 'customary' in quotes because there are important inconsistencies in Aristotle which the careful reader will notice, discussed below. 'Customary' therefore refers to the rather mainstream account influenced by Hegel, Nietzsche, and the later positivists, and possibly originating with Theophrastus.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 983b10ff:

> Concerning the first philosophers, most conceived only of material principles as underlying all things. That of which all things consist, from which they first come and into which on their own destruction they are ultimately resolved, of which the essence persists although modified by its affections—this, they say, is an element and principle of existing things. Hence they believe that nothing is either generated or destroyed, since this kind of primary entity always persists. Similarly we do not say that Socrates comes into being absolutely when he becomes handsome or cultured, nor that he is destroyed when he loses these qualities; because the substrate, Socrates himself, persists. In the same way nothing else is generated or destroyed; for there is some one entity (or more than one) which always persists and from which all other things are generated. All are not agreed, however, as to the number and character of these principles.
>
> Thales, the founder of this school of philosophy, says it [the principle] is water (which is why he also propounded that the earth floats on water). Presumably he derived this assumption from seeing that the nutriment of everything is moist, and that heat itself is generated from moisture and depends upon it for its existence (and that from which a thing is generated is always its first principle). He derived his assumption, then, from this; and also from the fact that the seeds of everything have a moist nature, whereas water is the first principle of the nature of moist things.[12]

The only thing Aristotle is absolutely clear about here is that, for Thales, *ὕδωρ* is the *ἀρχή* and the earth rests on *ὕδωρ*. There is no reason to suppose that *ὕδωρ* and *ἀρχή* are not Thaletan terms, since Aristotle openly speculates in virtually all other instances except this one.[13] The more important issue, however, is whether or not we can trust that the paragraph leading up to the declaration of Thales' *ἀρχή*, which Aristotle specifically limits to 'most' (*πλεῖστοι / pleîstoi*) of the earliest philosophers, not all, accurately captures the character and structure of Thales' world view.

O'Grady believes the threefold structure is indeed accurate and that the *ἀρχή* is *φύσις* (*phýsis*) in the most fundamental sense—and for her, this was a view completely devoid of any spiritual or authentically divine elements, in which case 'nature' is tantamount to 'matter.'[14] But there

[12] Trans. based on that of H. Tredennick (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Volume I: Books 1-9, translated by Hugh Tredennick, Loeb Classical Library 271 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), with a few small changes. Substantially, however, I have made the following: 'primary entity' was removed from line 21, since it does not appear in the Greek text, and the structure of the sentence refers back to line 20, in which we find *ἀρχῆς*, 'principles.' For an excellent edition of the Greek, see Oliver Primavesi, Texts of Metaphysics A (and of corresponding parts of M 4-5), in *Aristotle's Metaphysics Alpha,* edited by Carlos Steel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 465-516.

[13] Patricia O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus: The beginnings of western science and philosophy* (London, Routledge, 2002), 30. See also Maria Michela Sassi, *The Beginnings of Philosophy in Greece*, trans. Michele Asuni (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), Chapter 1; contra, see A. Lebedev, Book review: Maria Michela Sassi, *The Beginnings of Philosophy in Greece*, *Aristeas* XXIII (2021): 178–194.

[14] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus: The beginnings of western science and philosophy*, 46. Her argument for applying the threefold description of the *ἀρχή* (from the opening paragraph) to Thales concerns the use of *ἀλλὰ* and *μὲν* in lines 21-22 (ed. Tredennick), which, for her, indicates that the subject of the clause should be considered in relation to the previous clause (O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 29ff—the Greek reads: *ἀλλὰ Θαλῆς μὲν ὁ τῆς τοιαύτης ἀρχηγὸς φιλοσοφίας ὕδωρ φησὶν εἶναι*). In the previous clause, we find '*ἀρχῆς*,' so, 'All are not agreed, however, as to the number and character of these principles (*ἀρχῆς*)' (Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 983b19. Trans. Tredennick, *op.cit.*). But O'Grady moves from there (line 21) to line 19, in which it says 'there must be some one entity (*φύσιν)* (or more than one)' (Trans. Tredennick, *op.cit.,* 983b). Here O'Grady translates *φύσιν as* 'nature,' so 'there is some one nature,' and uses this as the basis of her conflation. But

are two immediate objections to this conflation, or at the very least objections that indicate we should not attribute to Thales the threefold constitutive *ἀρχή* from the opening paragraph. First, we find in the last line (line 28) of the excerpt that applies directly to Thales (and not the others): 'water is the first principle *of* the nature of moist things,'[15] in which case *ἀρχή* and *φύσις* are clearly differentiated. Why would Aristotle do this if not to deliberately express that Thales was concerned with the first principle of nature, since he says 'the principle [*ἀρχὴ*] of all things is that from which they come to be'?[16] The assumption that Thales was concerned with 'nature' as 'matter' comes from Aristotle's first paragraph, not the one concerning Thales, who, for all we can determine, was concerned with the *ἀρχή* of *φύσις*. Hence, just as *οὐσία*, *πάθος*, *ἁπλῶς*, *ὑποκείμενον*, and *στοιχεῖον* were not Thaletan terms, neither was the term *ὕλη* (*hýlē* / matter), which Aristotle appears to have coined in its philosophical dimension.[17] Furthermore, even if Aristotle thought that *ἀρχή* and *φύσις* were the very same for Thales, a proposition which I doubt, he does not indicate that Thales did so in such a way as to deny any divinity to nature.[18]

The second reason to dismiss the threefold constitutive *ἀρχή* is that Aristotle clearly differentiates the thinking of Thales from that of Hippo—who was indeed a material monist. He says, 'As for Hippo, one would not consider him worthy of being included among these thinkers because of the shallowness of his thought.'[19] Then, in *De Anima*, we learn just how shallow Hippo's thought was, for Aristotle recounts: 'Among the cruder thinkers, some have even declared that it [soul] is water, such as Hippo.'[20] Clearly, Aristotle did not mean to attribute to Thales a pure material monism and leaves ample room for a distinctively divine dimension to the *ἀρχή*, indicating at the very least that *φύσις* was not singular in the sense of a sole 'material' principle for Thales. In fact, this level of nuance was recognized by some of Aristotle's early commentators, who thought it important enough to address.

Iohannes Philoponus, *In Aristotelis de anima libros commentaria* 86=Th 442:

> They declare that he [Thales] said that Providence pervades the extremities [of the *cosmos*] and nothing escapes its notice, not even the slightest thing. This is why he does

see the translations of Treneddick, *op.cit*, and Bernabé, The Primordial Water: Between Myth and Philosophy, 425, both of whom use 'entity,' not 'nature.'

[15] *τὸ δ' ὕδωρ ἀρχὴν τῆς φύσεως εἶναι τοῖς ὑγροῖς.* Trans. McKirahan, *op. cit.*

[16] Trans. McKirahan, *op. cit.* (983b, 5=Th 29). For the notion of *underlying* unity as opposed to constitutive cause, see A.A. Long, The scope of early Greek philosophy, in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy,* edited by A.A. Long (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11.

[17] Renehan, On the Greek Origins of the Concepts of Incoporeality and Immateriality, 135.

[18] This is clear because, when considering Thales in relation to his potential influences, he states that they (the ancients) were the *first* to think about divine things [alt. 'the gods'] (*θεολογήσαντας* / *theologḗsantas*), with the implication that Thales, too, was concerned with divine things—the ambiguity for Aristotle only concerns whether or not Thales adopted this idea directly from them: 'Whether this view of the primary entity is really ancient and time-honored may perhaps be considered uncertain; however, it is said that this was Thales' opinion concerning the first cause.' (*Metaphysics* 984a1-3). Hence, at most Aristotle suggests Thales thought divine things were of a material sort, but not that matter was devoid of divinity. See also Panchenko: 'Imagine an Ionian Greek maintaining that the sun and the moon are just bodies, no more divine than the clouds or rocks. It would be a bold assertion, pointing towards a naturalistic outlook. We can imagine one who approves of such an assertion, another who says, "I don't know", and yet another who thoughtfully asks, "How can you know what is divine?" The last question could lead to an attempt at defining the divine, and in that case the initial statement could prove fruitful. But what I suggest is that an elaborate definition of the divine could provide the basis for a critical tradition, but the assertion "the sun and the moon are no more divine than the clouds" could not.' (Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 80).

[19] Trans. Apostle, from *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Grinnell, IA: The Peripatetic Press, 1979), 984a, 4-6.

[20] Trans. Mark Shiffman, *Aristotle's De Anima* (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2011), 405b, 1-2.

> not say that this view that the soul is composed of water was his [Thales'], but only that he attributed motion to the soul. He next says that Hippo held this view, that the soul is composed of water; for he, too, said that water was the principle of all things.[21]

Simplicius, writing at the same time, makes the very same observation in his commentary on Aristotle.[22] For these reasons, then, the differentiation between *ἀρχή* and *φύσις*, however subtly it applies to Thales in Aristotle's work, seems apt (and deliberate), for, if we take O'Grady's interpretation that the *ἀρχή* is *φύσις* and all are tantamount to matter, there is no justification for the differentiation between Thales and Hippo.[23]

An even more convincing analysis comes from Jaap Mansfeld. Mansfeld argues in a similar vein that Aristotle's only implication in *Metaphysics* 983b is that Thales was the original thinker who laid the grounds for subsequent 'materialism' to develop, claiming that 'Aristotle did not attribute to Thales more than a seminal idea which those who came after him exploited and further developed.'[24] In fact, as he points out, Aristotle specifically recognizes that Thales is the 'founder' (*ἀρχηγός / archēgós*) of this type of philosophy, but 'not that he had already professed it *in toto*.'[25] The implication, then, is that materialist philosophy 'was potentially already contained in the seminal idea that the origin is water,'[26] but this was not a specific doctrine of Thales—i.e., that everything *is* water. For Mansfeld, *ἀρχή* likely means simply origin (and he even suggests Hippias might have used *γένεσις* (*génesis*) in reference to Thales).[27] But if this is indeed the case, and *ἀρχή* is only 'origin,' how do we then interpret Aristotle's description that most of the early philosophers were searching for the *ἀρχή* as that 'of which all existing things consist, from which they first come to be, and into which they are finally destroyed'?[28] Is it merely an oversimplification that was extended to Thales by Aristotle's readers? It seems the answer is yes. Aristotle had a specific objective when describing the origin of philosophy, and that was 'to compare the investigations of his predecessors to his own.'[29] The problem with this approach is that Aristotle's concern with the four causes caused him to unintentionally project onto Thales' thought a strict materialism in which all things are water.[30] Indeed, Aristotle's list of 'materialists' was not his own, he just inserted 'material cause,' and so his handiwork (and specifically how it has been misinterpreted) is well documented.[31] Mansfeld argues:

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[21] Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit*.
[22] Simplicius, *In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria* 31.20-26 (ed. Hayduck=Th 422). See also Galen, *In Hippocratis de natura hominis librum commentarii* I 27 (Th 184): 'Someone else held that the primary and elementary humor is phlegm. But let us not investigate the names of those who first pronounced these uncouth views, since in fact we cannot prove from Thales' treatises that he declared water to be the only element, but nevertheless everyone believes so.' Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[23] See also Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 90-91; Algra, The beginnings of cosmology, 51; Barney, History and Dialectic in *Metaphysics* A 3, 85ff.
[24] Mansfeld, Aristotle and Others on Thales, 128.
[25] Mansfeld, Aristotle and Others on Thales, 119.
[26] Ibid. See also Long, The scope of early Greek philosophy, 12, 14; Algra, The beginnings of cosmology, 51.
[27] Mansfeld, Aristotle and Others on Thales, 119. For the argument concerning the potential terminological differences, see W. Schadewaldt, *Die Anfänge der Philosophie bei den Griechen: Die Vorsokratiker und ihre Voraussetzungen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), 225-6. See also U. Hölscher, Anaximander und die Anfänge der Philosophie, *Hermes* 81 (1954): 385ff. Mansfeld, Aristotle and Other on Thales, 109, note 1.
[28] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983 b6ff, translation Panchenko, *op. cit*.
[29] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 40; Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy,* 56ff.
[30] R. Pinto, 'All things are full of gods': Souls and Gods in Thales, *Ancient Philosophy* 36, 2 (2016), 256.
[31] Mansfeld, Aristotle and Others on Thales, 113. Cf. Plato, *Sophist* 242c-d; Isocrates, *Antidosis* 268; Xenophon, *Mem.* I 1, 14. See also J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1965), 9f; Long, The scope of early Greek philosophy, 7, 16; Jaap Mansfeld, Sources, in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, 26, 29; Algra, The

> Aristotle's hypothetical reasons for Thales' assumption are set out, I believe, with deliberate caution. They do not preclude that the things that come to be from water are actually transformed into something else. That heat itself comes to be from water and continues to live by it does not preclude that it is different from water. The protocol cases only prove that things come from or continue to come from water, not that they still are water.[32]

In Mansfeld's reading, and I agree, Aristotle did not mean to say Thales proposed 'water' as a constitutive cause, and the three-fold *ἀρχή* thus construed in *Metaphysics* 983b was indeed a simplification that applied to 'most' of the 'materialists' quite generally, with Thales simply starting this line of thinking. Thales indeed posited *ὕδωρ* as the *ἀρχή*, and in doing so, seems to have been the originator of later materialist philosophy which developed as a result of his initial speculations, but it is untrue to say he was a *bona fide* materialist. When we consider in the conclusion to this Chapter that *ὕδωρ* is better construed as 'divine water' for Thales, not simply 'water,' it will be clear that *ὕδωρ* is not a mere 'natural' principle, if by 'nature' we mean 'matter' devoid of divinity or divine influence.

Ultimately, Aristotle certainly used anachronistic language,[33] appears to have oversimplified things in his discussion of 'materialists' (leading to much confusion among interpreters), and even exhibits some bias for his own project in his approach—hence the character and structure of the *ἀρχή* as traditionally understood since at least Hegel is open to serious criticism. More, we should not consider Thales a 'natural philosopher' in the sense that he believed everything was water.[34] Indeed, Panchencko rightly suggests that this particular type of material monism should not apply to any of the early Milesian philosophers: 'Aristotle is not talking about the initial problems of the Milesians, but about what became a common practice of philosophical investigation along the lines established by the Milesians.'[35]

Hippias

We should add to our criticism of this notion of water as a constitutive cause brief mention of Hippias, and specifically Aristotle's potential suppression of Hippias' account of the origin of philosophy.[36] In his book, Håkan Tell, following others,[37] points out that Aristotle deliberately omitted Hippias' name when discussing the latter's account of the origin of philosophy with the intention to discredit it, in which case Aristotle 'staunchly rejects any attempt to lend the name of philosophy to these earlier expressions.'[38] Hippias allegedly claimed Thales' view was not new, and hence he was not the first philosopher (we do not

beginnings of cosmology, 51. For Theophrastus specifically, see Mansfeld, Sources, 29-30.
[32] Mansfeld, Aristotle and Others on Thales, 119.
[33] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy,* 56; Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 7-9; Frede, Aristotle's Account of the Origin of Philosophy, 9-44; Bernabé, The Primordial Water: Between Myth and Philosophy, 425.
[34] Iamblichus actually differentiates Thales and Anaximander, the later of whom he describes as a 'natural philosopher,' but not Thales. See Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 2.11-12 (ed. V. Albrecht).
[35] Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning,* 8.
[36] Snell, Die Nachrichten über die Lehren des Thales und die Anfänge der griechischen Philosophie- und Literaturgeschichte, 170-82; Frede, Aristotle's Account of the Origin of Philosophy, 9-44; Tell, *Plato's Counterfeit Sophist*, Introduction.
[37] Most notably Snell, Die Nachrichten über die Lehren des Thales und die Anfänge der griechischen Philosophie- und Literaturgeschichte, 170-82.
[38] Tell, *Plato's Counterfeit Sophist*, Introduction.

have Hippias' actual testimony).[39] In this view, it was Hippias who claimed Thales' view was similar to Homer's cosmographical positioning of Okeanos, a 'divine water' of sorts, which is not conducive to a naturalistic, material philosophy *per se*. Such editorial bias strengthens our earlier interpretation concerning materialism and also naturally raises important questions: Is there more to 'gods'[40] than another word for soul? Might Hippias' account have more clearly indicated that Thales' conception of the *ἀρχή* (or *γένεσις*) did not signify a constitutive principle in the strictest sense, which was originally proposed by Schwadewaldt?[41] The so-called *φυσικοί* (*physikoí*) were surely concerned with nature to some degree, but does that mean they all necessarily held a materialist-monist view? In Euripides (Fr. 910), for example, the Presocratics are described as follows:

> *ὄλβιος ὅστις τῆς ἱστορίας*
> *ἔσχε μάθησιν,*
> *μήτε πολιτῶν ἐπὶ πημοσύνην*
> *μήτ᾽ εἰς ἀδίκους πράξεις ὁρμῶν,*
> *ἀλλ᾽ ἀθανάτου καθορῶν φύσεως*
> *κόσμον ἀγήρων*
>
> Happy is he who gains understanding of learning, not for the harm of the citizens nor for entering into unjust acts, but beholding the ageless order of undying nature.[42]

That characterization is markedly different from trying to determine a single material principle 'of which all existing things consist, from which they first come to be, and into which they are finally destroyed.'[43] Essentially, moving away from water as constitutive cause opens up Thales' worldview to include more mythical and theological components (contra O'Grady), which we see indications of in the statement 'all things are full of gods.' This thinking is in line with Tell's train of thought: 'Hippias seems to have believed that all contemporary thinking that we today might characterize as philosophical was ultimately derived from older, mythological expressions, though these older expressions might lack the sophistication and explicit articulation found in later writers.'[44]

Ultimately, we are confronted with a difficult situation in terms of Thales: not only do we lack original fragments, what we do know about him is largely filtered through Aristotle, who might have deliberately suppressed the opinion of Hippias and possibly others in an attempt to discredit a more mythological basis for philosophy. This seems to have been done because Aristotle was specifically interested in the four causes, and his narrative thus positions Thales in line with the materialist philosophers. Or, alternatively, Mansfeld is correct and perhaps the problem truly is in the seemingly overzealous interpretation of Aristotle's works, for Aristotle himself said, 'he who loves myths is in some way a philosopher.'[45] Either way, Tell's analysis

[39] Ibid.
[40] From Aristotle, *De anima* 1.5.411a7-8 (Th32=DK 11 A 22).
[41] Schadewaldt, *Die Anfänge der Philosophie bei den Griechen: Die Vorsokratiker und ihre Voraussetzungen*, 225-6
[42] Euripides, Fr. 910 (ed. Nauck). Trans. from Carl A. Huffman, Heraclitus' Critique of Pythagoras' Enquiry in Fragment 129, in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* XXXV, edited by Brad Inwood (Oxford: UP, 2008), 26.
[43] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b6ff, translation Panchenko, *op. cit.*
[44] Tell, *Plato's Counterfeit Sophist,* Introduction.
[45] *καὶ ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφός πώς ἐστιν*. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982b18.

of Aristotle adds to our previous criticisms and indicates the application of a threefold *ἀρχή* to Thales is inaccurate, with which Mansfeld would agree.

Twofold Ἀρχή?

Given the justified skepticism and more cautious reading of Aristotle, Panchenko suggests that Thales had in mind a two-fold version of the *ἀρχή*, in which it is that from which things emerge and into which things are destroyed. For Panchenko, this two-fold version is far more likely because Thales' nearest contemporary, Anaximander, describes the *ἀρχή* by saying 'out of those things whence is generation for existing things, into these again does their destruction take place.'[46] Here it is clearly not a threefold constitutive cause, but rather twofold. Furthermore, Panchenko points out that Xenophanes also uses a twofold conception of *ἀρχή* when he says, 'everything comes from earth and into earth everything dies.'[47] Hence, our two earliest attested formulations of a philosophical *ἀρχή* are significantly different from Aristotle's later threefold version, supporting Mansfeld's claims. Indeed, all the early doxographers attest to this earlier conception of *ἀρχή*.[48] As Panchenko recounts:

> They may be understood as saying that everything originated from earth (or water), or that everything consists of earth (or water), or that everything originated and consists of earth (or water). The considerations of symmetry speak clearly in favor of the first possibility. Moreover, it is strange to say that things dissolve, destroy, or die into earth (or water) if they *are* earth (or water).[49] (emphasis original)

This understanding would certainly be closer to the earlier use of *ἀρχή* in Homer, where it means simply 'origin,' to which these earliest philosophers presumably add the teleological aspect to prevent exhaustion of the *ἀρχή* (Panchenko recognized it must always be replenished, whereas Mansfeld apparently did not see this as a necessary concern).[50] Panchenko thus proposes that the world is full of transformations of water, but does not consist of water itself.[51] Here he remains consistent with Mansfeld and also the important insight of Kempe Algra, who asked how the earth rests on water if it is water?![52] Clearly, the idea that Thales promoted a constitutive cause in which everything is water is not supported by the ancient accounts—including Aristotle—or contemporary scholarship.

Gods and Souls

Because Thales' *ἀρχή* was not a constitutive cause, 'soul' and 'gods' are ripe for new interpretation. Panchenko's coverage of Thales is also useful to help set the parameters concerning these terms, though this is an area in which I diverge from his interpretation. Like

[46] *ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστι τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι*—DK 12 B 1 (Simplicius, *Phys.* 24.13). Trans. Panchenko, discussed in Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 7.
[47] *ἐκ γαίης γὰρ πάντα καὶ εἰς γῆν πάντα τελευτᾶι*—DK 21 B 27. Trans. Panchenko, discussed in Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 8.
[48] Ibid., 8, citing Dox. 276; 579; 589, etc.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 8. Contra Bernabé, The Primordial Water: Between Myth and Philosophy, 425.
[51] Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 8, note 13.
[52] Algra, The beginnings of cosmology, 51. Cf. Servius Grammaticus, *Commentarii in Vergilii Aeneida* 3.241 (Th 317), 'But Thales, who maintains that all things are created from moisture, claims that bodies must be destroyed in order to be able to be dissolved into moisture.' Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*

O'Grady, Panchenko claims Thales' water was animated; his argument being that 'all things are full of gods'[53] and 'the soul is mixed with all things'[54] must be consistent with the view that all things are transformations of water.[55] For Panchenko, we therefore have one all-pervasive soul, which, it should be noted, is consistent with the view that *ὕδωρ* should be translated as 'divine water.' The two relevant passages from Aristotle are as follows:

Th 31:

> *Ἔοικε δὲ καὶ Θαλῆς ἐξ ὧν ἀπομνημονεύουσι κινητικόν τι τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπολαβεῖν, εἴπερ τὴν λίθον ἔφη ψυχὴν ἔχειν, ὅτι τὸν σίδηρον κινεῖ.*
>
> Thales, too, to judge from what is reported, seems to have held that the soul causes motion, since in fact he said that the magnet has a soul because it moves iron.[56]

and,

Th 32:

> *Καὶ ἐν τῷ ὅλῳ δέ τινες αὐτὴν [sc. τὴν ψυχήν] μεμῖχθαί φασιν, ὅθεν ἴσως καὶ Θαλῆς ᾠήθη πάντα πλήρη θεῶν εἶναι.*
>
> Some say that it [soul] is intermingled in the universe, and it is perhaps for that reason that Thales believed all things are full of gods.[57]

A careful analysis shows, however, that the only thing Aristotle is definitely attributing to Thales in the above quotes is that he believed all things were full of gods (Th 32). In Th 31, Aristotle is clear to say 'to judge from what is reported' and 'seems,' as opposed to 'Thales believed.' In terms of magnets, it is unclear if the 'fact' is a 'fact' reported to Aristotle, or his own knowledge that it is indeed a fact (I agree with the second interpretation but it is not certain). Likewise, in Th 32, the idea that the soul is mixed with the universe is 'perhaps' related to Thales' belief that all things are full of gods—Aristotle is certainly cautious about making this connection. All we know for sure, then, is that Thales believed 'all things are full of gods,' since Aristotle is absolutely clear about that. In Panchenko's reading, however, we have a form of panpsychism,[58] which is philosophically problematic if left unqualified, a point we will now touch upon.

Differentiation Between (Divine) Water and Soul

An essay by Rhodes Pinto helps us get closer to what I think is a more accurate portrayal of Thales' worldview. Pinto represents a position that allows for a more positive religious aspect

[53] Aristotle, *De anima* 1.5.411a7-8 (Th 32=DK 11 A 22).
[54] Plutarch, *Dinner of the Seven Sages* 21.163D (Th 126), probably extrapolating from Aristotle, *De anima* 1.5.411a7-8 (Th 32=DK 11 A 22).
[55] Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning,* 21
[56] Aristotle, *De anima* 1.2.405a19-21 (Th 31=DK 11 A 22). Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[57] Aristotle, *De anima* 1.5.411a7-8 (Th 32=DK 11 A 22). Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[58] This is a fundamental distinction between the Panchenko-McKirahan scheme, in which one sees a form of panpsychism, and Pinto. See Pinto, 'All things are full of gods': Souls and Gods in Thales, 255.

to Thales' use of 'gods.'[59] In his essay, he incorporates the key elements of Thales' philosophy that are probably authentic: the earth rests on water, the latter of which is the ultimate principle, amber and magnets possess soul, and all things are full of gods.[60] Pinto suggests, in a manner similar to Panchenko, that water is the 'generative principle' of all things, i.e., that from which all things emerge, that which sustains all things as an underlying principle but is not necessarily in each thing,[61] and that into which all things are ultimately dissolved (thus we have a qualified threefold structure).[62] What differentiates Pinto's interpretation from the rest is that soul is the inherent power to move and cause other things to move, but it is not an all-pervasive soul and so Thales is not, for Pinto, a panpsychist—indeed, he criticizes Panchenko and McKirahan who 'blur the line between water and soul.'[63] This seems fair, again, since Aristotle himself criticized Hippo for positing an aquatic soul, and clearly differentiates Hippo from Thales.[64]

Pinto, instead, reasons that individual things can possess soul, but not all things do (like earth).[65] He explains that if all things are mixed with soul, then earth too would have soul and would not need water to explain earthquakes.[66] Likewise, dead bodies would also possess soul in a panpsychist account, and that would have been absurd to Thales.[67] Pinto thus surmises that 'Thales would rather have been inclined to suppose that some kinds of bodies simply have no psychic character to betray.'[68] He cites Sedley's opposing viewpoint that perhaps the soul is 'too muted to show overtly' in such cases,[69] but counters that, 'if their character is too muted even to appear, why should Thales presume that they have this character?'[70] This is a fundamentally important observation on Pinto's part and one I'd like to build upon: soul for Thales is probably not *limited* to a single, all pervasive thing in Thales, and there is likely differentiation between world soul and individual soul, which we'll explore later in Finkelberg's interpretation.[71] For the time being, however, Pinto's reading is largely in line with the cautious interpretation of Aristotle's text as advocated by Mansfeld, with the additional qualification that Panchenko's notion of a final principle be included.

As for 'gods,' Pinto claims this must refer to water, not soul, because water is the ultimate generating thing that 'retains...the divinity afforded to such a principle,'[72] hence *ὕδωρ* is 'divine

[59] For the argument that 'all things are full of gods' means that 'nothing is more divine than anything else,' see John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1965), 50.
[60] Pinto, 'All things are Full of Gods': Soul and Gods in Thales, 243-261.
[61] Ibid., 253.
[62] Ibid., 257.
[63] Ibid., 250, but McKirahan is more cautious than Panchenko, 'If the link between souls and gods is valid (an assumption which is possible, though not certain)...' (McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates,* 30-1). See also D. Krell, *The Sea: A Philosophical Encounter* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 136-7, who seemingly conflates gods and soul. Algra is guilty as well. See Algra, The beginnings of cosmology, 53-4. Bernabé, The Primordial Water: Between Myth and Philosophy, 428, 435, also blurs the line.
[64] Cf. Aristotle, *de Anima* 405a with 405b. See also Mansfeld, Aristotle and Others on Thales, or the Beginnings of Natural Philosophy, 121-2; Barney, History and Dialectic in *Metaphysics* A 3, 85ff.
[65] Pinto, 'All things are full of gods': Souls and Gods in Thales, 252.
[66] Ibid., 251.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] See David Sedley, *Creationism and Its Critics in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 7.
[70] Pinto, 'All things are full of gods': Souls and Gods in Thales, 251.
[71] A. Finkelberg, *Heraclitus and Thales' Conceptual Scheme: A Historical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). See Chapter 9, below, for discussion.
[72] Pinto, 'All things are full of gods': Souls and Gods in Thales, 259.

water.' But for Pinto such water is not in all things (contra 'customary' Aristotle), since *πάντα πλήρη* (*panta plērē*) does not mean 'all' in the strict sense, but instead refers to humans, animals, etc. In his discussion, Pinto cites Gorgias, *Defense of Palamedes*, in which we see *ἅπαντα γὰρ πλήρη φυλακῶν*, meaning there were many guards around the place, but they were not literally pervasive.[73] Thus he suggests plants, air, heavenly bodies, and perhaps even the Olympian gods could be included as falling under the *πάντα πλήρη*, but not literally everything. As Pinto puts it: 'Hence the most probable sense of water as *ἀρχή* for Thales has emerged: the one stuff that initially generated other things and into which everything will eventually turn back.'[74] And even though this 'divine water' is not in all things, and is therefore not a constitutive principle in the manner of O'Grady, it nonetheless underlies all things. This new, qualified threefold *ἀρχή*, as I'll venture to show in the course of this book, with some important qualifications, was tacitly expressed in an earlier mythological framework.

Conclusions

In the final analysis, we can now begin to establish the basic parameters for assessing the influence of Acheloios on Thales by identifying the few things we know about his worldview. Because of the terminology Aristotle employed, it is certain that, (1) *Thales said water was the ἀρχή*, and, (2) *the earth rests on water*. We also know that, (3) *all things are full of gods*. Beyond those three fundamental principles we enter into a world of conjecture. The most important criticisms of Aristotle (or his interpreters) concerned his description of a threefold *ἀρχή*, which uses anachronistic terminology, does not line up with Aristotle's differentiation between Thales and Hippo, and is inconsistent with the twofold *ἀρχή* of Anaximander and Xenophanes. Because of this, and in addition to Mansfeld's close reading of the language and the notion of Thales as 'founder,' it is virtually certain that, (4) *Thales did not propose a strict material monism in which water was the constitutive cause of all things*. More, even though Thales might have used amber and magnets as a didactic device to demonstrate that even non-living things possess soul, it does not mean he adopted a pure panpsychist account, especially in light of his rationale for earthquakes or the example of the corpse, thus indicating, (5) *It is inaccurate to say soul was singular and all-pervasive without qualification*—it is likely that there was some form of differentiation between a cosmic soul and an individual soul, which we will explore only later.

In virtually all accounts but O'Grady's (which none of the leading scholars seem to accept), Thales' philosophy is not as readily defined as materialism in the 'customary' Aristotelean sense. He seems to have posited a 'soul' as the inherent motivating power of many things, and recognized that the world must originate from (and return to) some ultimate principle, which for him was *ὕδωρ*, 'divine water.' Thales certainly lacked the linguistic framework to discuss incorporeality since that is a later development,[75] but his philosophy surely contains the seed of dualism, since it incorporated the basic elements of materiality and divinity that would later emerge as distinct material and immaterial realms in the Platonic dialogues.[76] In fact, after establishing the connection between Thales and Acheloios, we'll see that Plato himself characterizes Thales in the very same way—as planting the moist seed of dualism in

[73] Ibid., 252. Cf. also Plato, *The Sophists* 233e.
[74] Ibid., 257. See also Michael Stokes, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Center for Hellenic Studies, 1971), Chapter 2.
[75] Renehan, On the Greek Origins of the Concepts Incorporeality and Immateriality, 105-138.
[76] For example, Plato, *Phaedo* 78b4-84b8.

his account of divine water as *ἀρχή*, which is best construed in the qualified threefold sense of 'governing origin,'[77] meaning that from which things emerge, that which underlies and sustains or governs all things, and that to which all things ultimately return.

[77] John Sallis' terminology, as used in his graduate lecture course on nature in ancient Greek philosophy, Boston College, c. 2006.

Chapter 4

The Emergence of Acheloios and Major Elements of His Cult

'Achelous, you're on!'

-Aristophanes[1]

Acheloios is the single most overlooked yet incredibly significant deity in all of archaic and classical Greek religion, and before we can have any meaningful discussion of the relation of Acheloios to Thales, we must also present a basic overview of his cultic tradition.[2] Acheloios is a relatively obscure figure today for two reasons. First, he is exceptionally old, probably

[1] Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 381, trans. Jeffrey Henderson, from Aristophanes, *Lysistrata,* trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 1988).

[2] Acheloios (or the eponymous river) is mentioned in the following ancient literature: Homer, *Il.* 21.194-7; *Il.* 24.616 (cf. Schol. Hom. *Il.* 21.194-5 (ed. Erbse); Schol. Hom. *Il.* 24.616 (Erbse); *Genavensis* 44); Hesiod, *Theogony* 340; Pseudo-Hesiod, *Catalog of Women* fr. 10a 35-37 (ed. Most); Archilochus, Fr. 286 (ed. West IEG 97), Fr. 287 (West IEG 97); Sappho Fr. 212 (ed. Campbell); Alcaeus Fr. 450 (ed. Campbell); Akousilaos, *FGrH* 2 F 1=11a; Hecataeus Milesius, Fr. 72; 378 (forgery); Aeschylus, *Persians* 869; Archemachus, Fr. 9; Pindar, Fr. 249b (ed. S.-M); Hippocrates of Cos, *Epidemics* 2, 4-7(as a name); Panyassis, Fr. 1, Fr. 13 (ed. West); Sophokles, *Fr.* 4; *Trachiniae* 9, 510; Herodotus, *The Persian Wars* 2.10.3, 7.126, Euripides, *Andromache* 167, *Bacchae* 625, *Hypsipyle* fr. 753 *TGrF* 5,1:758; Achaeus, *Athens* 4.9; *TrGF 20 F 9*; Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 2.102.2ff; 3.7.3; 3.106.1; Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 381; *Rooster* fr. 365 PCG 3.2:205; Plato, *Phaedrus* 230b-c, 263d; Ephorus, *FGrH* 70 F 20 (Fragment 27); *P.Derveni* XXIII; Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 1.13, 1.14; *De anima* 420b13-15; *History of Animals* IV.IX.535b14-20; Demetrius of Phaleron, *On Style* 45-6, 202, 206; Callimachus, *Anthologia Palatina* 12.51; *Hymn to Demeter* 9-16; Apollonius Rhodius, *The Argonautica* 4.282-293, 4.891-899; Demonicus, Fr. 1; Polybius, *Histories* 4.63.12.15, 5.6.6-10, 5.7, 5.7.6-9, 5.13.10-13; Lykophron, *Alexandria* 712-6 (not named outright); Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 1.39.11ff; 4.35.3-4; Virgil, *Georgics* 1.9; Hyginus, *Fabulae* Th.6, Th. 30, 31.7, 125.13, 141, 274.1; Strabo, *Geographica* 1.18.47-51, 6.4, 7.8, 8.2.3, 8.3.11, 8.3.26, 9.10, 10.2.1-3, 10.2.19, 10.2.21-24, 10.3.6, Propertius, *Elegies* 2.33ff; Ovid, *Fasti* 5.343, *Metamorphoses* 9.96, 9.413, *Heroides* 9.139-140, *Amores* 3.6.35-36; Seneca, *Hercules Oetaeus* 300, 496; Pliny, *Natural History* 2.87-8, 8.17f, 11.118, 37.56; Silius Italicus, *Punica* XII, 27-43; Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Geographia* 3.13.1.5, 3.13.2.9, 3.13.4.7, 3.14.1.10, 3.14.12.1; Plutarch, *Moralia: On Exile; Lives: Perikles* XIX; Statius, *Thebaid* 1.447-465, 2.141-143, 2.469-474, 2.726-731, 6.830-833, 7.414-417, 7.552-553, 9.213-214; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.3.4, 1.7.3, 2.7.5, 3.7.5-7, E.7.18; Arcadius, *De accentibus* p. 47.3; Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 60.1, 63.1; Pomponius Mela, *Chronographia* 2.53.1-2.54.1; Pseudo-Plutarch, *De fluviis* 22; Philostratus of Athens, *Heroicus* 15.5, 54.5-7; *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* VII.3, VII.25; Pausanias, *Hellados Periegesis* 1.34.3, 2.2.3, 8.38.9-10, 10.8.9; Maximus Tyrius, *Diss. II, Diss. XIII*, *Diss. XXXVIII*; Lucian, *De Saltatione* 50; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Physicists* 9.181-183; Hippolytus of Rome, *Chronicon* 237; Ammonius, *P.Oxy* 0221, Column VIII-IX; Philostratus Maior, *Imagines* 1.23, 1.25; Philostratus Minor, *Imagines* 4; Athenaeus of Naucratis, *The Depnosophists* 9.410d, 10.427d; Porphyry, *On Statues* F 359.5-11 (ed. Smith); Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evengelica* 3.11.22; Basil, *Letters* CCCXLV; Claudian, *The Rape of Prosperine* 3.254-259; *Shorter Poems* 30.171-176; Menander Rhetor, *The Talk* 2.3.17; Servius, Fr. 344 (ed. Kern); Didymus, *Tragic Diction FGrH 2*; Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 13.309-332, 17.235-239, Macrobius, *Sat*. 5.18.1-12; Sidonius, *Poems* 2.465-466, 2.497-501, 11.86-88; Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophia* 4.7.23; Zosimus, *New History* 4.34.3; Hermias, *In Platonis Phaedrum scholia* p.32.9; Joannes Malalas, *Chronographia*, p. 164.5-19, p. 165.3-5; Isidore of Seville, *Etym. Mag.* P.181.10-15; *P.Berol*. inv.13270 and song *PMG* 917; Dicuil, *de Mensura Orbis Terrae*; Theodontius, *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium* 1.19.10ff; 2.406-461 (ed. Papio); Symeon Logothetes, *Chronicon* p. 187-188; Joannes Tzetzes, *Argumentum et allegoriae in Homeri Iliadem*, 21.73, 24.281; Michael Psellus, *De omnifaria doctrina*, 175.13; Eustathius, *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem et Odysseam* 1.428.16, 1.473.24, 1.484.17, 1.485.10-11, 1.553.17, 1.793.5, 2.788.8, 3.107.23, 3.491.22, 3.843.13, 4.475.13-15, 4.484.3-6-8.13.16 (*sic*), 4.962.3.8-11, 4.964.7; *Schol. Ven. A* 21.195; *Schol. Ven. B.* 21.194; *Schol. Townl.* 21.194; *Schol. Townl.* 21.195; *Scholia in Aeschylum, Scholia in Persas* 871. Acheloios is mentioned in the following inscriptions, geographically arranged: IG I^3 255 (Attica); IG I^3 1061 (Attica); IG II^2 4547 (Attica); MDAI(A) 67 (1942) 55,89 (Attica); SEG 21:541 (Attica); IG V 2 284 (Arkadia); IG V 2 285 (Arkadia); IG IX 1^2 1:3 (Aitolia); SEG 25:845 (Delos); IG XII 9 135 (Euboia); IC IV 375 (Gortyna); IC I xvii 7 (Crete: Lebena); Halikarnassos 60 (Caria); I. Lipara App. I, 507, 2 (Lipara); IGASMG IV 84 (Metapontion). Cf. also I. Kourion 131; I. Kourion 134; I. Kourion 138; I. Kourion 142, featuring Αχελομορφωθ (Amathus). For Etruscan epigraphy, see Isler, 'Acheloos,' *LIMC*, 26, 47, no. 230.

emerging in the late Iron Age. Second, much of the core content of his tradition was foreign in derivation. In fact, Acheloios seems to have appeared in the western world in various stages over a fairly extended period of time, and because the key figures operative in his emergence in the West were all itinerant by occupation, his cult covered a truly vast area.[3] It is particularly difficult to give a detailed account of the formative years of the Iron Age into Archaic times, which is exactly the time period most interesting for our purposes. Nonetheless, we do know that the cultic practices, core mythology, and iconography of Acheloios undoubtedly derive from earlier Near Eastern traditions,[4] with Sardinians, Cypro-Phoenicians, Ionians, and Carians acting as the leading exponents from East to West.[5] Extrapolation from such evidence helps us draw many conclusions, because looking at Acheloios' earlier predecessors and comparing them to later evidence from Classical Greek art and literature, we can infer the content of the intermittent periods that offer less direct evidence.

Most important to understanding the early cult is the idea that mercenaries and seers were particularly important in the distribution of the iconography and core *mythos* to the west, and for a variety of reasons.[6] For the seafaring mercenary, an aquatic deity that served an apotropaic function, operated as a conveyor of souls, and represented great abundance (from the cornucopia), essentially incorporated all of their immediate and spiritual concerns as well as their *raison d'être*. Likewise, for the itinerant seer-healer, a water deity associated with purification, the repulsion of evil (thus also disease), and oracular/arcane knowledge was ideal. Add to these descriptions the cultic belief in assimilation with the deity and he becomes all the more valuable—it is Acheloios, as a liminal figure, that mediates between two worlds and directly connects the individual with the gods.[7] Combined, these two groups, often working in tandem, are responsible for the wildly popular cult of Acheloios in various Mediterranean cultures of antiquity.

In the area of Archaic Etruria we find what are probably the oldest cultic attestations of Acheloios proper[8]–at this point, the name Acheloios can safely be attached to the iconography of the man-faced bull.[9] Here Acheloios is often found underground in tombs, but in some cases he is accompanied by celestial motifs, indicative of his liminal status.[10] More, in this region in particular, specific emphasis was placed on his apotropaic nature, which is why

[3] The most recent, comprehensive account of Acheloios and his earlier influences is found in Nicholas Molinari and Nicola Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios. A Comprehensive Catalog of the Bronze Coinage of the Man-Faced Bull, with Essays on Origin and Identity* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016), 97-9 for overview. See also N. Molinari, Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and the Apotheosis of Herakles: The Importance of Acheloios and Some Numismatic Confirmations, *KOINON* I, Inaugural Issue (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2018): 1-29; N. Molinari, Αχελομορφωθ: Magistrates of Akarnania. A Reconsideration of the Iconographic Fluctuations on Akarnanian Federal Coinage, *KOINON* III (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020): 59-76.

[4] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 6-16, but see 1-5 for evidence of earlier, Old European man-faced bulls and a provisional argument for contacts via the so-called 'Ubaid horizon.'

[5] Ibid., chapters 2 and 3 for the transference of the iconography from the Near East into 'Western Civilization.'

[6] See ibid., 25-33.

[7] This characteristic also transferred over from Near Eastern practices and is reflected as late as the 3rd century AD on Cyprus, where the actual term, Αχελομορφωθ, is employed in cultic practice. See Molinari, Αχελομορφωθ: Magistrates of Akarnania, *passim.*

[8] The earliest piece is probably an offering bowl that features the head of Acheloios as a man-faced bull upon whom a figure (Herakles) grasps his horns. See J. M. Eisenberg, The Art of the Italic Peoples. A Major Exhibition in Paris, *Minerva*, Vol.5, No.2 (London: Aurora, 1994), Figure16.

[9] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* Chapter 3 for early Sardinian, Italian, and Sicilian traditions influencing the formal cult, discussed in Chapter 4 of that work.

[10] Ibid., 53-61. In fact, in one of the few extant Etruscan inscriptions we find *Ανκηλως εως υπο Τυρρηνων,* translated by Semerano as 'overseer of sunrise.' See G. Semerano, *La favola dell' indoeuropeo* (Milano: Mondadore, 2005), 77.

Figure 3: Aryballos in the form of the head of Acheloios, from Locri, early sixth century BC. Author's drawing of an item in the Museo Nazionale, Reggio Calabria. Inv. 6139.

masks and protomes of Acheloios are such a predominant form of artistic representation.[11] In the Archaic Eastern Greek world (Anatolia), on the other hand, Acheloios is first depicted with wings, more indicative of his position as divine water.[12] During the Classical era, in which we have more literature and art to assist us, his cult and associated *mythos* become nearly all encompassing: lustratio rituals and other koureion rituals intimately related to individual and civic identity;[13] a strong apotropaic dimension in which he is a protector of mercenaries and, indeed, entire cities;[14] a chthonic dimension tied to notions of rebirth and the transmigration of the soul;[15] agriculture and wealth related of course to the cornucopia and with it, the notion of expiatory sacrifice.[16] In both Archaic and Classical times Acheloios was seen by some as the source of all water and often equated with water, [17] as outlined in the next section. By late Hellenistic times, however, he was somewhat confined to a particular river in Akarnania that flows into the Mediterranean at Oiniadai (this transition was more-or-less first suggested by Wilamowitz).[18] It is relatively late that archaeological evidence of a distinct cult of Acheloios appears in Greece proper, c. early fifth century BC, there depicted as a man wearing a woman's dress[19] and later (c. 430 BC) on coinage in Akarnania as a man-faced bull.[20] The first place for cultic worship in Greece was likely earlier in Dodona, where, as Ephorus tells us, nearly all patrons were instructed to make a sacrifice to Acheloios.[21]

[11] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 48-55. He appears on shields and helmets, or as a rampant man-faced bull on multiple antefixes, for instance.
[12] Cf. Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, G. Kenneth Jenkins, and Mário de Castro Hipólito, *A catalogue of the Calouste Gulbenkian collection of Greek coins*. Part II (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1989), no. 720.
[13] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 69-70.
[14] Ibid., 28-33. See also entries for the Kersini, Mamar, Sergetaians, and Sileraians in the catalog.
[15] See, e.g., ibid., 66ff.
[16] Ibid., *passim*, but cf. 30f.
[17] G.B. D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams: Ocean and Acheloios, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 124 (2004): 16-37, for commentary.
[18] Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1931), I, 93, 219, who argued the Hellenic Acheloios was replaced by the Carian Okeanos.
[19] M. M. Lee, Acheloos Peplophoros. A lost statuette of a River God in Feminine Dress, *Hesperia*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (2006): 319.
[20] O. Dany, *Akarnanien in Hellenismus. Geschichte und Völkerrecht in Nordwestgriechenland* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1999), 276ff, 311ff.
[21] Ephorus, *FgrH* 27= Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.18.6.

In the Eastern Greek world, which is our primary concern, Acheloios was worshipped as an object of cult since at least the early sixth century.[22] Some of the most compelling evidence of the early cult comes from Rhodes, where there appears to have been a workshop that manufactured *aryballoi* in the form of the head of Acheloios (Figure 3), dating from roughly the second to third quarter of the sixth century BC, and these are found all over the Mediterranean.[23] Some pieces were manufactured independently in other places, like Etruria, as early as c. 590 BC.[24] Collectively, these objects, and many others like them (discussed in Chapter 6), indicate the cult of Acheloios was well-established by the first half of the sixth century in various areas throughout the Mediterranean. Scholia T of the Iliad[25] also attests to a cult of Acheloios at Rhodes, and, for that matter, the two most enthusiastic issuers of coinage featuring Acheloios were Gela and Neapolis (beginning c. 520 BC and 450 BC, respectively), both of which have early ties to Rhodian colonists.[26] Rhodes presumably adopted the iconography of the man-faced bull and related mytho-religious traditions directly from the orient: There is textual evidence from Herodotus and Diodorus of Ionian and Carian mercenaries working for an Assyrian vassal king, Psammeticus I, in Egypt in the mid seventh century BC.[27] These mercenaries are just one example of the very types mentioned above that were instrumental in the development and spread of the cult. Ultimately, as various groups were exposed to the iconography in the eastern Mediterranean and brought it back to the west, along with its associated cultic practices, the cult of Acheloios was crystalized and quickly spread into a Pan-Hellenic phenomenon of great proportions, merging with local bull and bull-man water cults.

Literature

In literature, there are several fifth-century passages that equate Acheloios with fresh water, indicative of an early tradition in which Acheloios was more widely venerated and less the obscure river god most are vaguely familiar with: Sophokles (Fr. 5, Pearson), 'So Achelous runs with wine in our place;'[28] Euripides (*Bacchae*, 625), 'ordering his servants to bring water;'[29] Achaeus (*Athens* 4.9), 'but surely Achelous was not very dry;'[30] Aristophanes (*Lysistrata* 381),

[22] Ibid., 56ff.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 57.
[25] Schol. T of *Iliad* 24.616 (ed. Harmut Erbse, *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem (Scholia vetera),* Vol.IV, *Scholia ad libros O – T continens* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010)).
[26] For Neapolis, see Strabo, *Geographica* 14.2.10; for Gela, see Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 6.4.3 and Polybius, *Historiae* 9.27.7f.
[27] For the Ionian mercenaries specifically, see Herodotus, *Histories* 2.152-4; Diodorus, *The Library of History* 1.66.12-67.2 (the passages are reproduced in Chapter 6, below). For coverage of western mercenaries in the east with an extensive overview of the literature, see Wolfgang-Dietricht Niemeier, Archaic Greeks in the Orient: Textual and Archaeological Evidence, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 322 (2001): 11-32, especially 16ff.
[28] *οἴνῳ παρ' ἡμῖν ἀχελῷος ἅρα νᾷ* . Trans. Ana Isabel Jiménez San Cristóbal, The Sophoclean Dionysos, in *Redefining Dionysos,* edited by Alberto Bernabé, Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui, Ana Isabel Jiménez San Cristóbal, Raquel Martín Hernández (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 294.
[29] *δμωσὶν Ἀχελῷον φέρειν ἐννέπων*. Trans. David Kovacs. Euripides, *Bacchaea. Iphigenia at Aulis. Rhesus*, edited and translated by David Kovacs, Euripides Volume VI, Loeb Classical Library 495 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). Cf. also fr. 753 *TGrF* 5, 1:758, in which reference is made to Acheloios' stream but not the Akarnanian river: *δείξω μὲν Ἀργείοισιν Ἀχελῴου ῥόον* / 'I shall show the Argives Achelous' stream,' trans. Robert Kaster, from Macrobius, *Saturnalia,* Volume II, translated by Robert Kaster, Loeb Classical Library 511 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). Cf. also Euripides, *Andromache* 163-168.
[30] *μῶν Ἀχελῷος ἦν χεχραμένος πολύς*. Translation from uncertain source.

'Achelous, you're on!;'[31] (*Rooster*= fr. 365 *PCG* 3.2:205), 'I had not mixed the drink with Achelous.'[32] This ancient view is summarized by Ephorus:

Ephorus (no. 70, fr. 20 *FGrH*):

> Now, only the inhabitants nearby sacrifice to other rivers; the Acheloios alone happens to be honored by all humankind, who refer to other rivers by their proper names, not by one or another common term, whereas they adopt the Acheloios' proper name as the common term. For we generally call 'water' (as the common term has it) 'Acheloios,' from the river's proper name, whereas in the case of other names we often use the common terms in place of the proper, for example calling Athenians 'Hellenes' or Spartans 'Peloponnesians.' As the best explanation of this puzzle I can offer only the oracles from Dodona. For in nearly all his pronouncements the god was accustomed to enjoin sacrifice to Acheloios, with the result that many people came to believe 'Acheloios' the oracle meant, not the river that flows through Akarnania, but 'water' *tout court*, and so they imitate the terms of address used by the god. As a token of this, there's the fact that we usually speak that way in referring to the divine: for we call water 'Acheloios' above all in oaths and in prayers and in sacrifices, all things that concern the gods.[33]

Even as late as Virgil the practice of referring to water as 'Acheloios' was still extant: '... discovered the grape, and mixed it with cups of the Achelous' (*Georgics* 1.9).[34] Servius claims Orpheus is the ultimate source for this tradition: 'before the discovery of wine, as Orpheus teaches, the ancients generally called water "Achelous."'"[35] In the earliest sources, however, there is some discrepancy. In Hesiod, Acheloios is mentioned along with other rivers as the eldest son of Okeanos and Tethys (*Theogony* 337f),[36] thus Okeanos appears to occupy the more fundamental (seemingly aquatic) role.[37] However, in Homer, earlier versions of the *Iliad* excluded *Il.*21.195 (italicized below), making Acheloios the antecedent of the relative pronoun and thus the source of all water:

> *τῷ οὐδὲ κρείων Ἀχελώϊος ἰσοφαρίζει,*
> *οὐδὲ βαθυρρείταο μέγα σθένος Ὠκεανοῖο,*
> *ἐξ οὗ περ πάντες ποταμοὶ καὶ πᾶσα θάλασσα*
> *καὶ πᾶσαι κρῆναι καὶ φρείατα μακρὰ νάουσιν*

[31] *σὸν ἔργον ὦχελῶε*. Trans. Henderson, *op.cit.* Alternatively, 'to work, Achelous!'
[32] *οὐ μείξας πῶμ' Ἀχελώῳ*. Trans. Robert A. Kaster, *op. cit.*
[33] Trans. Robert Kaster, *op. cit.*
[34] *poculaque inventis Acheloia miscuit uvis*. Trans. Robert Kaster, *op. cit.*
[35] *nam, sicut Orpheus docet, generaliter aquam veteres Acheloum vocabant*. Trans. David Ross Jr., *Virgil's Elements: Physics and Poetry in the Georgics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 34. See Servius, Fr. 344 (ed. Kern), as cited in D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 22. The connection of Orpheus to Miletus is exhibited in the 5th century in one of its colonies, Olbia, in which 'Orphikoi' was inscribed on a bone tablet. See Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The PreSocratic Philosophers*, 30. Cf. R. Edmonds III, *Redefining Ancient Orphism: A Study in Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), *passim*, who argues there was no cohesive Orphic cult in antiquity, but rather the term was adopted and exploited by various entities to add an element of authority to their respective teachings.
[36] In *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*, we suggest this lowering of Acheloios was a deliberate move because Hesiod hated mercenaries. Indeed, in the later, classical Attic thinkers, mercenaries are still frowned upon for their employment by tyrants.
[37] But cf. M.-C. Beaulieu, *The Sea in the Greek Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), *passim*, in which Okeanos is an imaginary continuation of the sea.

> Him not even Lord Acheloios equals,
> *nor the great might of deep-flowing Okeanos,*
> from whom, indeed, all rivers and all sea
> and all springs and deep wells flow[38]

In fact, as recounted by D'Alessio, Zenodotus athetized line 195 (*ὅτι Ζηνόδοτος τοῦτον ἠθέτηκεν ἄρας*)[39] because he knew Okeanos did not belong, and this repositioning of Acheloios is further supported by the fact that Megakleides' earlier version of the *Iliad* omitted line 195 altogether.[40] Indeed, Megakleides is quoted verbatim in the *Genavensis*: 'which stream is greater than Acheloios, "from whom all rivers <flow>"?...so that he omitted the line about Ocean.'[41] Likewise, in *Il.* 24.614 Acheloios is referred to in a general way: 'of the nymphs that range swiftly in the dance about Achelous' (his association with the nymphs indicates an identification with water in general).[42]

The discovery of the *Derveni Papyrus* added to the case for the fundamental position of Acheloios vis-à-vis all water, and has begun to change our understanding of early Greek thought altogether. In that document, Acheloios is equated with water and Okeanos is equated with air and Zeus:[43]

P.Derveni XXIII:

> *τοῦτο τὸ ἔπος πᾳ[ρα]γωγὸν πεπόηται καὶ το[ῖς] μὲν*
> *πολλ̣οῖς ἄδηλόν ἐστιν, τοῖς δὲ ὀρθῶς γινώσκουσιν*
> *εὔδηλον ὅτι 'Ὠκεανός' ἐστιν ὁ ἀήρ, ἀὴρ δὲ Ζεύς.*
> *οὔκουν 'ἐμήσατο' τὸν Ζᾶνα ἕτερος Ζεύς, ἀλλ› αὐτὸς*
> *αὑτῶι 'σθένος μέγα'. οἱ δ' οὐ γινώσκοντες τ̣ὸν*
> *Ὠκεανὸν ποταμὸν δοκοῦσιν εἶναι ὅτι 'εὐρὺ ῥέοντα'*
> *___ προσέθηκεν. — ὁ δὲ σημαίνει τὴν αὑτοῦ γνώμην*
> *ἐν τοῖς λεγομέν[ο]ις καὶ νομιζομένοις ῥήμασι.*
> *καὶ γὰρ τῶν ἀν[θ]ρώπων τοὺς μέγα δυναᾳ[οῦ]ντας*
> *___ 'μεγάλους' φασὶ 'ῥ̣ῠ̣ῆναι'. τὸ δ' ἐχόμενον·*
> *___ 'ἵνας δ' ἐγκᾳ̣[έλε]ξ' Ἀχελωΐου ἀργυ̣[ρ]οδίν̣ε̣[ω'.*
> *τῶ[ι] ὕδα[τι] ὅ̣λ̣[ος τίθη]σι Ἀχελῶιον ὄνομ̣[α. ὅ]τ̣ι δὲ*
> *τα[c]δινα[ς ἐκγκαταλ]ἐξαι ἐστ[ὶ...]δ̣ε ἐγκᾳτῶ[σ]α̣ι·*
> *τὴν [γ]ἀ̣ρ̣[ ]τ̣ων αυ[τ̣]...*

[38] Trans. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 10. For the argument, see D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 16-37. See also a summary of evidence by Michael Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, Vol. II (Oxford: University Press, 2013), 2-12.

[39] From the late 13th century manuscript *Genavensis* 44, as reported by D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 17. No translation available but it seems clear enough.

[40] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 16ff.

[41] *ᾧ ποῖον ῥεῖθρον μεῖζον Ἀχελώιου, 'ἐξ οὗπερ πάντες ποταμοί,' ὥστε παρέλιπεν τὸν περὶ τοῦ Ὠκεανοῦ*. Trans. D'Alessio, *op. cit.*

[42] *ὅθι φασὶ θεάων ἔμμεναι εὐνὰς νυμφάων, αἵ τ' ἀμφ' Ἀχελώϊον ἐρρώσαντο*. Trans. A.T.Murray (Homer, *Iliad,* Volumes 1 & 2, translated by A.T. Murray, revised by W.F. Wyatt, Loeb Classical Library 170 and 171 (Cambrdge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924)). Later traditions followed this, since in many accounts Acheloios is seen as the father of the sirens. See, for example, Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.18, 1.63; Hyginus, *Fabulae* 141; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 4.892ff. Scholia T concerning the cult of Acheloios at Rhodes is in reference to this passage.

[43] From André Laks and Glen Most, A Provisional Translation of the Derveni Papyrus, in *Studies on the Derveni papyrus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997): 20). Hesychius (5th century C.E.) also lists 'air' as the primary meaning for Okeanos in his lexicon (Hesychius, and Moritz Schmidt, *Hesychii Alexandrini lexicon* (Sumptibus Hermanni Dufftii, 1867), 1579).

ἑκαᾳ[τ̣]δε βουλ[
ε̣.ν̣[ ]ο̣ντε[

This verse has been made misleading and it is unclear to the many, but to those who understand correctly it is quite clear that Ocean is the air and the air is Zeus. It is not the case that one Zeus contrived another Zeus but the same one (contrived) for himself great strength. But those who do not understand think that Ocean is a river because he added 'broadly flowing.' But he indicates his intention in current and customary expressions. For they say that the very powerful among men 'flowed great'. And the next verse,

...the sinews of silver-eddying Acheloios.

to the water...the name Acheloios...and the sinews...is the

...each...[44]

In the standard reading, following D'Alessio and many others, Acheloios is equated with water and the rivers of the world are the local manifestations, his sinews.[45] Indeed, D'Alessio argues, somewhat following Wilamowitz,[46] that the tradition of Acheloios was earlier, ultimately stemming from Near Eastern traditions, and that cosmogonic inconsistencies within the epic tradition emerged with the later Okeanos.[47] This idea of Acheloios as the source of even the sea is also supported by an anonymous authority at the beginning of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus*:

P.Oxy 0221, IX, 1-3:

]νας[ἐ]γκατέλεξα / Ἀχελωίου ἀργυροδνεω
ἐξ οὗ πᾶσα θάλασσα

[44] Trans. Laks and Most, *op. cit.* G. Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus: Cosmology, Theology, and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 48f, in his reconstruction of the text, has *τῶ[ι] ὕδα[τι] οὐ τίθη]σι Ἀχελῶιον* ('he does not give the name Achelous to water') instead of *τῶ[ι] ὕδα[τι] ὅλ[ος τίθη]σι Ἀχελῶιον*, but no one accepts this rendition (cf. e.g., A. Bernabé, *Poetae Epici Graeci*,Vol. 2, Part III (Teubner, 2007)). For one, it is contrary to everything else we know about Acheloios, but also, Betegh's reconstruction does not make sense given the customary writing style of the Derveni author, and, in fact, is not even long enough to fill up the empty space in the fragment. For the discussion, see T. Kouremenos, G. M. Parássoglou, and K. Tsantsanoglou, *The Derveni Papyrus. Edited with Introduction and Commentary. Studi e testi per il 'Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini,'* Vol. 13 (Florence: Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki, 2006) 259f, who say the *ὅλ* is clear enough on the fragment.

[45] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 16-37; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, 2-12.

[46] Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen,* I, 93, 219, who, as mentioned above, claimed Acheloios was the original Hellenic god supplanted by Carian Okeanos.

[47] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 29ff. There is no doubt that the two competed, and for that matter as early as the late Archaic Age. Evidence of such issues might be found in *P.Oxy* 221, Column IX, 8-11: *πῶ[ς] δ' ἐπορ[εύθ]ης ῥεῦμ' Ἀ[χ]ελ[ω]ίου ἀργυ[ρο]δίνα, Ὠκεανοῦ ποταμοῖο [δι'] εὐρέος ὑγ[ρ]ὰ κέλευθα* / 'How did you cross the stream of silver-eddying Acheloios, through River Ocean's wet paths?' (Trans. D'Alessio, *op. cit.*) D'Alessio's interpretation is that this line is evidence of a conflation between Acheloios and Okeanos and that it served as a compromise between the opposing camps. While that is probably true, it still reads to me as though Okeanos is inferior to Acheloios, as though one potential way of crossing the more fundamentally important, liminal stream of Acheloios *might be* via river Okeanos' wet paths. In other words, to me it supports the idea that Acheloios is the ultimate basis for all water, including River Okeanos.

> The sinews of silver-eddying Acheloios
> From where the whole sea [originates][48]

Note the obvious connection to the *Iliad* 21 passage, which situates Acheloios in the same role. The basic idea, then, behind these passages is that Acheloios is the strength (source or power) of rivers and the rivers of the world are his sinews, ἴς meaning either strength or sinews.[49] Thus, in Pindar we have ἰς refer to power: 'Formerly, the power [ἰς] of Acheloös, Europa's spring, and the streams of the Melas nourished the most melodious reed.'[50] Here, Acheloios is that underlying, inherent force that powers all the springs of Europe.

Although Acheloios' role did in fact diminish over time, he was still revered in a more ultimate capacity in the 4th to 3rd century BC. As recounted by D'Alessio, there is a line from a banquet song in which the speaker fears that a ship has gone too far, claiming, 'the drops of Acheloios have already touched it.'[51] In this case D'Alessio pointed out that Acheloios' field continued to include the liminal outer-boundary, an area reserved for Okeanos in the customary account of Homer.[52] Finally, there is a series of late (c. 2nd to 3rd century AD) inscriptions found on lead prayers tablets from Amathus, Cyprus, in which the person invoking the gods does so by assuming the form of Acheloios: 'I adjure thee, assuming the form of Acheloios, who is the only god on earth, Osous Oisornophis Ousrapio [Osiris]: do that which is written here!'[53] Here we see that Acheloios is positioned as the 'only god on earth,' with the indication that Acheloios operates in a distinct liminal capacity different from all the other gods. This idea finds clear parallels in the earlier Derveni cosmogony, in which Acheloios 'stands out as the only physical operation in a series of creative acts stemming from Zeus' *μῆντις* [*mêntis*],' seemingly indicative of the importance of Acheloios to longstanding Orphic practices.[54]

Ultimately, then, the literary and inscriptional evidence indicates Acheloios was seen as the source of all water and at the same time identified with water from a very early date. This view was shared by many, and the cultic worship of Acheloios was longstanding—first encompassing much of the Mediterranean, by Hellenistic times greatly reduced, but even in Roman times still maintaining clear cultic significance, albeit in certain isolated pockets.

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[48] Transcription from ibid., 20. Translation not provided by D'Alessio but formulated based on his translation of *P. Derveni* XXIII plus my rendering of *ἐξ οὗ πᾶσα θάλασσα*, which is clear and unambiguous.
[49] See Chapter 9 for discussion.
[50] *πρόσθα μὲν ἴς Ἀχελωίου τὸν ἀοιδότατον Εὐρωπία κράνα Μέλ[ανό]ς τε ποταμοῦ ῥοαὶ τρέφον κάλαμον*. Trans. W. Race, *Pindar I: Olympian Odes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). From *P.Oxy* II (1899) 64, schol. of Ammonius on *Il.* 21.195. Pindaric fragment quoted in the London papyrus on *Il.* 21.195 (Fr. 249b, ed. S.-M.), which D'Alessio rightly claims is connected to Dodona since 'Europa was the place...where a hundred springs mingled.' (D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 33.)
[51]]*νῆά τοι τέγξαν Ἀχελώιου δρόσο[ι]*. From ibid., 31, citing *P.Berol.* inv.13270 and song *PMG* 917 (c), text as supplemented by Wilamowitz.
[52] Stemming from Homer, *Il.* 8.485; 18.607; *Od.*11.13; 4.563ff. See D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 29-30, and 33-4. See ibid., 23-29, for the Near Eastern influence on Acheloios, not Okeanos. For Okeanos, the arguments for an early, Indo-European source are less secure: See Adalbert Kuhn, ὠκεανός, *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiet des Deutschen, Griechischen und Lateinischen*, Vol. 9 (1860), 240; Michael Janda, *Die Musik nach dem Chaos. Der Schöpfungsmythos der europäischen Vorzeit* (Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck, 2010), 57 ff.
[53] *ἐνορκίσζω ὑμᾶς κατὰ τοῦ Αχελομορφωθ ὅστις ἐστὶν /[μό]νος ἐπίγιος θεὸς Οσους οισωρνοφρις ουσραπιω ποιήσαιτε τὰ ἐνγεγραμ[μ]-/ [έν]α·* Translation mine.
[54] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 23. See also Molinari, Αχελομορφωθ: Magistrates of Akarnania, *passim*.

Local Embodiments

By the fifth century, when Acheloios was often being identified in literature with water itself, his cult was widespread across the greater Greek world, and numismatics offers some of the best evidence of this. On Greek coinage, Acheloios almost always takes the form of a man-faced bull, and his appearance is remarkably pervasive.[55] In many cases, his spread can be tied directly to the aforementioned ancient mercenary tradition—for instance, the Kersini, Mamar, Sergetaian, and Sileraian mercenary groups of Sicily.[56] But the iconography is also at the forefront of larger cities with powerful mercenary ties like Gela[57] and Panormos.[58] Agyrion, too, issued coins featuring Acheloios as a man-faced bull, and there is archaeological evidence of Italic mercenaries buried at the site during the time the iconography was used.[59] In northern Greece we find Acheloios Pamisos as a man-faced bull at Metropolis,[60] another area known for its mercenaries,[61] and all throughout Campania the iconography was employed for hundreds of years.[62] In fact, in Campania, we even find issues that have ΙΣ written directly beneath the belly of the man-faced bull, which indicates, at least to me and Dr. Sisci,[63] the idea that the figure is a 'sinew' of Acheloios, which is simultaneously an exhibition of Acheloios' strength. This brings us to the next point: Scholars have debated the very identity of the man-faced bull for about 500 years, with the contemporary debate divided into two primary schools of thought—those who believe the man-faced bull is Acheloios, and those who believe the man-faced bull is a representation of a local river, Acheloios being one among many. Recently, however, Dr. Sisci and I argued that the man-faced bulls on Greek coinage are local embodiments of Acheloios, sometimes featuring the appropriate qualifying locative epithet: Acheloios Gelas (Gela), Acheloios Palagkaios (Agyrion), and so on and so forth.[64] In fact, the earliest man-faced bull on coinage in Italy is from Rhegion, c. 510 BC, and probably features Acheloios Apsias, which we connected etymologically with the Near Eastern 'Apsu' (i.e. Acheloios Apsias is reminiscent of the predecessors, Asallúhi and Apsu), Apsu being the same figure West and others connect to Thales.[65] Other times, in Akarnania specifically, it appears that Acheloios merged with local magistrates in cultic practices, who 'assumed the form of Acheloios.'[66] In any case, our solution to the issue of local river gods alleviated the dichotomy of the two schools of thought by incorporating both systems in a way consistent with Greek religion, a framework in which a god without an epithet is but an 'artifact of language.'[67] More importantly, as we will see throughout this book, this interpretation has profound implications for a new understanding of Thales and his contribution to philosophy.

[55] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 5. Approximately seventy-one mints issued some variety of coinage featuring a local embodiment of Acheloios as a man-faced bull.
[56] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 146-8, 153-5.
[57] G.K. Jenkins, *The Coinage of Gela* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1970).
[58] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 150-2.
[59] Ibid., 124-8.
[60] Ibid., 287-8.
[61] C. Morgan, *Early Greek States Beyond the Polis* (New York: Routeldge, 2003), 141-142.
[62] A. Sambon, *Les monnaies antiques de l'Italie* (Paris: Bureaux du Musée).
[63] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 160ff.
[64] For the full argument, see ibid., Chapter 6 & 7.
[65] M.L.West, *Early Greek philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 213.
[66] Molinari, Αχελομορφωθ: Magistrates of Akarnania, 61.
[67] Pierre Brulé, Le lange des épiclèses dans le polythéisme hellénique, *Kernos*, 11 (1998): 18-19 (trans. Jenny Wallensten, Personal protection and tailor-made deities: the use of individual epithets, *Kernos*, 21 (2008): 82).

Conclusion

Ultimately, the pervasive identification of Acheloios with fresh water, combined with the evidence from *P. Derv., P. Oxy.,* the *Iliad* scholia and related material positioning Acheloios as the very source of all water, provides the backdrop for reassessing the mythological influences on Thales. If Thales said water was the ultimate principle, surely a deity equated with water must be examined as a potential source of inspiration and influence. This figure, however, has been completely overlooked in scholarship. Francis Cornford's brilliant work falls short in this respect,[68] and M.L. West missed the figure in his major study.[69] Acheloios is also absent from the now-standard work of Kirk, Raven, and Schofield,[70] as well as several other authoritative works on early philosophy. [71] In David Krell's new work, he claims: 'Numberless songs hail "the seven seas." But there is only one sea, or at least only one *source* of the sea. The Greeks called it *Ὠκεανός* [*Ōkeanós*],' (emphasis original) therein overlooking important scholarship on the relevant Homeric passages.[72] Finally, O'Grady goes so far as to remove all elements of a spiritual outlook from Thales' worldview.[73] In her summarization of the thinker, she claims: 'When Thales defined reality, he chose an element, not a god,'[74] thereby overlooking the fact that, like Helios is to the sun, Acheloios was identified with the element itself. Evidently, a reexamination of Thales and his *ἀρχή* as it relates to religion and myth is in order, and the first place we should look is the term Thales used, *ὕδωρ*, the subject of the next chapter.

[68] F. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study of the Origins of Western Speculation* (London: E. Arnold, 1912).
[69] West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*.
[70] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 76-99.
[71] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 39-72; McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates,* 23-31; Algra, The beginnings of cosmology, 45-65; Long, The scope of early Greek philosophy, 1-21; G. Reale, *From the Origins to Socrates: A History of Ancient Philosophy*, edited and translated by J. Catan (New York: SUNY, 1987), 29-37; Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Greek Mind in Greek Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Dover, 1960); H. Blumenberg, *The Laughter of the Thracian Woman: A Protohistory of Theory*, New Directions in German Studies, translated by Spencer Hawkins (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015); Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*; J. Sallis, *The Figure of Nature: On Greek Origins* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016), 15-18, 21, 67-8, 72, 108, 113-117; Finkelberg, *Heraclitus and Thales' Conceptual Scheme*; Sassi, *The Beginnings of Philosophy in Greece*, Chapter 1.
[72] Krell, *The Sea: A Philosophical Encounter,* xxvii.
[73] F. Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe der Werke*, Vol. 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980), 815, who claimed Thales thinks 'nonmythically and nonallegorically'—an ungrounded proposition. Trans. Krell, *op.cit.*
[74] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 123.

Chapter 5

The Etymology of Ὕδωρ: Pure, Sacred Water

'...just so did the flood of the river ever overtake Achilles, fleet of foot though he was; for the gods are mightier than men.'

-Homer[1]

Aside from the problems with Aristotle's account of the philosophical parameters of Thales' thought, his reference to the potential mythological influences on Thales is equally problematic. Aristotle tells us, in the *Metaphysics*, that Thales might have developed his opinion about *ὕδωρ* based on the myths of Okeanos, Tethys, and Styx.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b:

> There are some who think that the men of very ancient times, long before the present era, who first speculated about the gods [alt. 'divine things], also held this same opinion about the primary entity. For they represented Oceanus and Tethys to be the parents of creation, and the oath of the gods to be by water— Styx, as they call it.[2]

Aristotle's account is reminiscent of the classic Hesiodic narrative, in which Okeanos and Tethys mix, and Styx emerges from them,[3] and some believe Thales developed his philosophy analogously from these earlier mythological predecessors—presumably Hippias was the first to suggest this.[4] But as we saw in the last chapter, the myths concerning Okeanos were by no means ossified dogma in archaic Miletos, and indeed were likely predated by myths concerning Acheloios. In fact, Ephorus tells us, quite clearly, '...we call water [*ὕδωρ*] "Acheloios": above all in oaths and in prayers and in sacrifices, all the things that concern the god,'[5] thereby suggesting an alternative to Styx and the Okeanos tradition, and one consistent with the idea that Acheloios is the source of all water.[6] More importantly, Aristotle's prioritization of the Okeanos tradition also overlooks the fact that *ὕδωρ* referred to fresh water in antiquity, and usually applied to the water of a river, not the saltwater sea (Okeanos, though sometimes described as a river, was an abstract extension of the sea).[7] The ultimate purpose of this chapter is therefore to create an initial break from the Okeanos tradition (dealt with mythographically in Chapter 8) precisely by investigating the early uses of *ὕδωρ*. Moreover, in this chapter we will see that the Akkadian root of *ὕδωρ* and its Sanskrit cousin are consistent with the Greek, further reinforcing the widespread use of *ὕδωρ* to mean fresh water or water as such, which was almost invariably seen as inherently divine. To support the move away from Okeanos and Styx, and

[1] Homer, *Iliad* 21.262-4. Trans. Murray, *op.cit.*
[2] Trans. Tredennick, *op.cit.*
[3] Cf. Hesiod, *Theogony* 775-805.
[4] Snell, Die Nachrichten über die Lehren des Thales und die Anfänge der griechischen Philosophie- und Literaturgeschichte, 170-82.
[5] Ephorus, no. 70 fr.20 *FGrH.*
[6] D'Alessio makes the same connection. D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 32f.
[7] Beaulieu, *The Sea in Greek Imagination*, *passim*.

also the translation of Thales' *ὕδωρ* as 'divine water,' we will also examine how *ὕδωρ* is referred to as *θεοί* (*theoí*) as early as Homer. This notion, of a multiplicity of deities contained in a single substance, is reflective of earlier Dodonaean practices and of the Acheloios tradition, since the rivers of the world are the sinews of Acheloios—essentially many individual deities (*θεοί*) sharing an underlying aquatic nature.

Ὕδωρ in Homer

Quite simply, *ὕδωρ* refers to 'water' in Greek,[8] but water, as with nature quite generally in the ancient world, was largely seen as inherently sacred or, rather, somehow infused or conjoined with divinity. In the earliest instances, viz., Homer, *ὕδωρ* refers to fresh water unless employing a specific epithet, and then only rarely.[9] For instance, *ὕδωρ* is used in the *Iliad* twenty-three times and in that work it never refers to salt water. It either refers to river water, spring water, or water used for cleaning the body or a wound.[10] One passage that is particularly useful in exhibiting the meaning of *ὕδωρ* shows the nature of river water as a powerful, divine force:

Homer, *Iliad* 21.257ff:

> *ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἀνὴρ ὀχετηγὸς ἀπὸ κρήνης μελανύδρου*
> *ἄμ φυτὰ καὶ κήπους ὕδατι ῥόον ἡγεμονεύῃ*
> *χερσὶ μάκελλαν ἔχων, ἀμάρης ἐξ ἔχματα βάλλων:*
> *τοῦ μέν τε προρέοντος ὑπὸ ψηφῖδες ἅπασαι*
> *ὀχλεῦνται: τὸ δέ τ' ὦκα κατειβόμενον κελαρύζει*
> *χώρῳ ἔνι προαλεῖ, φθάνει δέ τε καὶ τὸν ἄγοντα:*
> *ὣς αἰεὶ Ἀχιλῆα κιχήσατο κῦμα ῥόοιο*
> *καὶ λαιψηρὸν ἐόντα: θεοὶ δέ τε φέρτεροι ἀνδρῶν.*
>
> As a man who guides its flow leads from a dusky spring stream of *water* among his plants and garden plots, a mattock in his hands, and clears away the dams from the channel, and as it flows all the pebbles beneath are swept along, and it glides swiftly onward with murmuring sound down a sloping place and outstrips even him who guides it, just so did the flood of the river ever overtake Achilles, fleet of foot though he was; for the gods are mightier than men.[11]

Homer's description is important for a few reasons: First, it exhibits one of the many uses of *ὕδωρ* to refer to the water of a river; second, it illustrates the power of the river to easily tackle Achilles—in fact, a few lines later, it takes Poseidon and Athena to save him;[12] thirdly, it acknowledges both the destructive and generative properties of water (hence its binary nature); fourthly, it employs no epithet to qualify *ὕδωρ*; and, finally, it encompasses the divine

[8] Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* s.v. *ὕδωρ*.
[9] Ibid.
[10] *Iliad* 2.307 (spring water); 2.720 (*ὕδρου* in reference to a water snake); 2.850 (water of a river); 3.270 (used in cleaning hands); 6.457 (spring water); 7.99 (quite generally); 8.369 (river water); 9.15 (natural fountain/spring); 11.830 (used in cleaning a wound); 11.846 (used in cleaning a wound); 14.435 (river water); 16.161 (spring water); 17.54 (spring water); 17.747 (river water); 18.347-9 (bath water); 21.14 (river water); 21.258 (spring water); 21.312 (river water); 21.365 (river water); 22.149 (spring water); 23.282 (water for cleaning); 24.303 (water for cleaning). All citations and translations follow Murray, *op.cit*.
[11] Trans. Murray, *op. cit.*
[12] Homer, *Iliad* 21.284ff.

nature of water (note also the plural, *θεοὶ*). Although this particular passage is arguably the most all-encompassing in terms of the meaning of *ὕδωρ* in the *Iliad*, the other passages are all consistent with its use here. Thus, in the *Iliad* at least, *ὕδωρ* refers to fresh water, generally that of a spring or river, and it has a divine or sacred dimension, even referred to as *θεοὶ* on occasion.

All this is not to say the salty sea goes unmentioned in the *Iliad*. Quite the contrary—it appears hundreds of times and never employs the term *ὕδωρ*. Usually 'sea' is the translation for *θαλάσσης* (*thalássēs*). So, for example, in *Iliad* 1.34, one finds *πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης* for 'loud-resounding sea.'[13] Likewise, the Greek word *ἅλς* (*háls*), which also means salt,[14] is often used in reference to the sea,[15] e.g., *πολιῆς ἁλὸς*, which means 'grey sea' in *Iliad* 1.359. *Πόντος* (*póntos*) can also refer to sea; it is usually paired with *ἅλς*, as in the following passage:

Homer, *Iliad* 1.350:

> *αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς*
> *δακρύσας ἑτάρων ἄφαρ ἕζετο νόσφι λιασθείς,*
> *θῖν' ἔφ' ἁλὸς πολιῆς, ὁρόων ἐπ' ἀπείρονα πόντον*
>
> But Achilles burst into tears and drew apart from his comrades, and sat down on the shore of the gray sea, looking out over the wine dark deep.[16]

In some instances, *πόντος* appears alone. For example, in *Iliad* 4.276, we find *πόντον* used in reference to the sea, translated again as 'deep' as in the above excerpt. Finally, *πέλαγος* (*pélagos*) also refers to the sea in the sense of 'the high sea.'[17]

The *Odyssey* is mostly consistent with the *Iliad* in its use of the term, although in some cases *ὕδωρ* will signify salt water when employing a specific epithet (e.g., *ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ* / *halmyròn hýdōr*—salt water).[18] Its use for salt water is rare. Of the 52 times *ὕδωρ* appears in the *Odyssey*,

[13] Trans. Murray, *op. cit.*
[14] Cf. e.g., *Iliad* 9.214; 11.123; 17.455; 23.270, per R. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of Homeric Dialect* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 23.
[15] Cf. e.g., *Iliad* 1.141, 316, 350, 358; 2.626 / *Odyssey* 1.162; 3.73; 4.580, 844; 13.235, etc., per Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of Homeric Dialect*, 23.
[16] Trans. Murray, *op. cit.*
[17] Beaulieu, *The Sea in the Greek Imagination*, 2.
[18] *Odyssey* 1.110 (water mixed with wine); 1.146 (water for cleaning); 3.338 (water for cleaning); 3.429 (for drinking) 4.213 and 4.216 (water for cleaning); 4.418 (quite generally as an element); 4.511 (salt water=*ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ*); 5.70 (spring water); 5.100 (sea water=*ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ*); 5.165 (drinking water); 5.185 (river water); 5.266 (drinking water); 5.475 (presumably river or lake water); 6.86 (river/spring water); 6.91 (spring water); 7.131 (*ὑδρεύοντο*, in reference to 'drawing water'); 8.426 (bath water); 8.436-7 (bath water); 9.85 (water to drink); 9.140 (spring water); 9.209 (mixed with wine); 9.227 (salt water=*ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ*); 9.392 (water for cooling hot metal); 9.470 (salt water=*ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ*); 10.56 (water for drinking); 10.105 (*ὑδρευούση*, in reference to 'drawing water'); 10.108 (spring water); 10.358-60 (bath water); 10.514 (river water); 10.520 (as libation); 11.28 (as libation); 11.586 (drinking water); 12.172 (reference to sea water: made the water white with their oars); 12.236 (salt water of the sea= *θαλάσης ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ*); 12.240 (salt water of the sea= *θαλάσης ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ*); 12.305 (sweet water); 12.363 (as libation); 12.431 (salt water of the sea= *θαλάσης ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ*); 13.409 (spring water); 15.294 (salt water of the sea= *θαλάσης ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ*); 17.204 (*ὑδρεύοντο*, in reference to 'drawing water'); 17.208 (*ὑδατοτρεφέων*, in reference to 'grow by the water'); 17.209 (spring water); 19.387 (bath water); 19.537 (where geese reside); 20.153 (spring water); 20.158 (*μελάννδρον*, dark spring water); 21.270 (for cleaning); 22.439 (for cleaning); 22.453 (for cleaning); 24.45 (bathing).

only 8 times it refers to salt water with this epithet. So, for example, in Book 12 of the *Odyssey* the use is very clear and unambiguous:

Homer, *Odyssey* 12.234-243:

> *ἡμεῖς μὲν στεινωπὸν ἀνεπλέομεν γοόωντες:*
> *ἔνθεν μὲν Σκύλλη, ἑτέρωθι δὲ δῖα Χάρυβδις*
> *δεινὸν ἀνερροίβδησε θαλάσσης ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ.*
> *ἦ τοι ὅτ' ἐξεμέσειε, λέβης ὣς ἐν πυρὶ πολλῷ*
> *πᾶσ' ἀναμορμύρεσκε κυκωμένη, ὑψόσε δ' ἄχνη*
> *ἄκροισι σκοπέλοισιν ἐπ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἔπιπτεν:*
> *ἀλλ' ὅτ' ἀναβρόξειε θαλάσσης ἁλμυρὸν ὕδωρ,*
> *πᾶσ' ἔντοσθε φάνεσκε κυκωμένη, ἀμφὶ δὲ πέτρη*
> *δεινὸν ἐβεβρύχει, ὑπένερθε δὲ γαῖα φάνεσκε*
> *ψάμμῳ κυανέῃ: τοὺς δὲ χλωρὸν δέος ᾕρει.*
>
> We then sailed on up the narrow straight with wailing. For on one side lay Scylla and on the other divine Charybdis terribly sucked down the *salt water of the sea.* Indeed whenever she belched it forth, like a cauldron on a great fire she would seethe and bubble in utter turmoil, and high overhead the spray would fall on the tops of both the cliffs. But as often as she sucked down the *salt water of the sea*, within she could all be seen in utter turmoil, and round about the rock roared terribly, while beneath the earth appeared, black with sand; and pale fear seized my men.[19] (emphasis added)

Here the usage of the epithet indicates it is not *ὕδωρ* as it is traditionally used, but qualified in a very specific way. Hence, *ὕδωρ* as such is not *ἁλμυρὸν*; *ἁλμυρὸν* is, rather, a characteristic not essential to *ὕδωρ*.

Aside from the aforementioned passage and the others like it, there is one more that deserves consideration. This occurs again in Book 12 in the infamous episode in which Odysseus is hearing the call of the Sirens (usually the daughters of Acheloios)[20] as the ship passes by their island.

Homer, *Odyssey* 12.170ff:

> *ἀνστάντες δ' ἕταροι νεὸς ἱστία μηρύσαντο*
> *καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐν νηὶ γλαφυρῇ θέσαν, οἱ δ' ἐπ' ἐρετμὰ*
> *ἑζόμενοι λεύκαινον ὕδωρ ξεστῇς ἐλάτῃσιν.*
>
> My comrades stood up and furled the sail and stowed it in the hollow ship, whereupon, sitting at the oars, they made the *water white* with their polished oars of pine.

What is noteworthy about the context of this passage is that Odysseus is traveling in the sea and the sea water is referred to here as *ὕδωρ* without *ἁλμυρὸν*. However, it does still employ an epithet, *λεύκαινον* (*leúkainon*), for 'white,' and therefore does not necessarily violate the notion

[19] Trans. Murray, *op. cit.*
[20] See, for example, Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.18, 1.63; Hyginus, *Fabulae* 141; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 4.892ff.

that standing alone, *ὕδωρ* refers to fresh water. In this case, Homer appears to have used *ὕδωρ* because, in describing minute, particular characteristics of water, *θαλάσσης*, *ἅλς*, *πόντος*, or *πέλαγος* would not suffice, since those refer to more general or indistinct things like ocean, sea, or 'deep,' and not to the underlying substance, water. Ὕδωρ is therefore far more precise, hence appropriate for describing minutiae like how the oar effected the physical appearance of the water by making little white bubbles. Essentially, then, the employment of *ὕδωρ* in the *Iliad* and the largely consistent use in the *Odyssey* suggests that if Thales was influenced by mythological tales, it was likely a myth that related to pure water, since he chose the term *ὕδωρ*.

Semitic roots

Akkadian

Looking at the etymology of *ὕδωρ* reveals that its use as pure (usually divine) water, as opposed to salty water, is consistent with earlier roots and contemporaneous foreign relatives. Ὕδωρ comes from the Akkadian *edû/adû*,[21] primarily in the sense of 'high water,' being a loanword from the Summerian *adû*.[22] (*a* = , and means 'water' in Sumerian, emerging from the pictograph of two rivers running parallel).[23] For instance, in an inscription from Sargon II, we find the following:

The Annals of Sargon 264:

> *da-ád-me-šu eli* ^{nâr}*Mar-ra-ti ù gu-pu-uš e-de-e it-ta-kil-ma a-de-e ma-mit ilâni*^{me}*[š]*
>
> his dwelling, in the 'Bitter River' and the power of the flood put his trust, and the agreements (and) the oath to the great gods.[24]

In this case the *e-de-e* is translated by Lie as 'flood.' In certain cases, however, the earlier *adû* was employed, because in *Die akkadische Synonymenliste 'D'* it is recorded that *a- = e-du-ú*.[25] Interestingly, in the quote above we find both *edû* and *adû*, however *adû* here (*a-de-e*) means 'oath.'[26] This usage of *adû* as oath is attested during Neo-Assyrian times (c. 900 to 600 BC).[27]

[21] Following G. Semerano's work, G. Semerano, *L'Origini Della Cultura Europea*, Vol. II: *Dizionari Etimologici* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1994), 208f. For a broad, general sketch of the language borrowings, see Allan R. Bomhard and John C. Kerns, *The Nostratic Macrofamily: A Study in Distant Linguistic Relationship* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994), 607-8.

[22] Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, Band I: A-L (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965), 187, citing in particular an Early Babylonian inscription in which *a-dé-a = e-du-u* (See Tafelsignaturen der Vorderaisiatischen Abteilung der Berliner Museen 10270 IV 47).

[23] John Alan Halloran, *Sumerian Lexicon: A Dictionary Guide to the Ancient Sumerian Language* (Los Angeles: Logogram, 2006); Marie-Louise Thomsen, *The Sumerian Language: An Introduction to its History and Grammatical Structure*, 3rd Edition (Copenhagen, 2001). Note also the plurality.

[24] A.G.Lie, *The Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria. Part I: The Annals*, tranlisterated and translated by A.G.Lie (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1929), no. 264 (n.b. CAD incorrectly lists 'Lie Sar. 224,' which is totally unrelated; cf. A. Leo Oppenheim, ed., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, Volume 4, E (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1958), 35).

[25] Wolfram von Soden, Lexikalisches Archiv.: Die akkadische Synonymenliste 'D,' *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 43 (1936), 236, and Taf. VIII.

[26] von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, 14; Ignace Gelb, Benno Landsberger, A. Leo Oppenheim, and Erica Reiner, eds., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Volume I: A, Part 1 (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute, 1964), 131.

[27] Gelb, *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, 131-6.

'Oath,' 'testament,' and even 'covenant' would be valid translations, so far as I am able to determine. The interesting thing to note is that the cuneiform for both *adû* as 'oath' and *adû* as 'high water' are theoretically the exact same, thus *adû* means either 'high water' or 'oath' depending on the context, hence there was presumably a semantic overlap based on the divine dimension to water.

Semerano further adds that the *–ωρ* of *ὕδωρ* corresponds to Akkadnian *âru* ('to go, to advance').[28] The Akkadian *âru* has a semantic crossing with another Akkadian word, *ḫāru,* and its Hebrew equivalent, *tsinnor* (עִבּוֹר),[29] both meaning 'a pipe, waterspout, or even watercourse,' but figuratively, 'the "sluices" of heaven opened.'[30] The first, literal sense of *tsinnor*, in which it refers to a watercourse, comes from 2 Samuel. (Archaeologists believe they have found the actual tunnel referred to here):[31]

2 Samuel 5:8:

> And David said on that day: 'Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites, and getteth up to the *gutter*, and [taketh away] the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul--.' Wherefore they say: 'There are the blind and the lame; he cannot come into the house.'[32]

This is fascinating, because the notion of a man-made channel in which water flows has obvious correlations to the Acheloios tradition and its earlier predecessors (hence Strabo relates the battle of Herakles and Acheloios specifically to water regulation).[33] The second reference is more figurative. Here it is found used in Psalm 42 to mean waterfall, but in the sense of a heavenly power overcoming an individual. Psalms 42, 8: 'Deep calleth unto deep at the voice of Thy cataracts; all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me.'[34] Altogether, then, the root of the *–ωρ* of *ὕδωρ* also has fluvial denotations, revealed especially in the Hebrew tradition.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the Akkadian word for ocean or saltwater sea is generally *tâmtu*, from which we get Tiamat,[35] not *edû/adû*. So, for instance, in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* we find, ša *imtahṣu kīma hayyālti inūh tâmtu* / 'The sea grew calm that had fought like a woman in labour,'[36] in which *tâmtu* means 'sea.' Hence, just as in the Greek tradition *θαλάσσης, ἅλς, πέλαγος,* or *πόντος* is used for sea, not *ὕδωρ*, in the Akkadian scriptures one finds *tâmtu*, not *edû/adû*.

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[28] Semerano, *L'Origini Della Cultura Europea*, 208f.
[29] Ibid., 208f.
[30] See Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017), 857, Strong 6794. See also Wilhelm Gesenius, Frants Buhl, Heinrich Zimmern, W. Max Müller, Friedrich Oswald Kramer, and Arnold Walther, *Wilhelm Gesenius' Hebräisches und Aramäischeshandwörterbuchüber das Alte Testament* (Leipzig: F.C.W. Vogel, 1921).
[31] For the original theory, see L.-H. Vincent, *Jérusalem: Recherches de topographie, d'archéologieet d'histoire.* Volume I: *Jérusalem antique*. (Paris: Gabalda, 1921). For a recent reassessment of the theory, see Chapter IV of R. Reich and H. Shanks, *The City of David: Revisiting Early Excavations: English Translations of Reports by Ramond Weill and L.-H. Vincent* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2004).
[32] Trans. using New American Standard Bible.
[33] See Chapter 12 and the Conclusion of this book for discussion of this theme.
[34] Trans. using New American Standard Bible.
[35] Erica Reiner, et al., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, Volume 18 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2006), 150-8.
[36] Translation and transliteration from A.R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). For additional uses, see Reiner, *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, 150-8.

Altogether, then, the Akkadian relatives present the historical notion of an eternally moving (*âru*), sanctified (*adû* as oath), homogeneous substance (*edû/adû* as high water) embedded in the root system of the term *ὕδωρ*. Thus, Aristotle's speculation about the influence of Styx on Thales, and our mention of Acheloios occupying the same role in oaths in Ephorus' account, stem from a longstanding tradition that recognized the sanctity of pure water. In other words, both accounts attest that the notion of swearing an oath by water was well known in the Greek tradition and that tradition appears to reflect the earlier meanings of the root words *edû/adû*, in which the same word could mean either oath or water, hence we can say that *ὕδωρ* has an inherently divine dimension in antiquity.

Sanskrit Correspodances

ὕδωρ is also related to Sanskrit *udan* (उदन्), which likewise refers to (fresh) water quite generally, but here too there is a divine or sanctifying dimension.[37] *Udan* is interesting because it is usually part of a compound and does not stand alone, dropping its -न.[38] Thus, where *ὕδωρ* forms the root for words such as *ὑδροφόρος* (*hydrophóros*, carrying water, thus combined with *φέρω / phérō*), so उदन् forms parts of words such as *udakumbha*/ उदकुम्भ (water jar, thus combined with *kumbha*/कुम्भ). In fact, just as we find in the Greek tradition, when an ancient Indian author wanted to say saltwater, the epithet लावणकि (*lavanika*) was applied to the base उदन् (*udan*) to form the word उदलावणकि (*udalavanika*).[39] Hence, also like the Greek, उदन् (*udan*) alone never means saltwater, but rather fresh water.

To illustrate its meaning as fresh water it is useful to look at *samudra* (समुद्र), which means a 'collection of waters' (quite literally 'all/together water')[40] but does not mean 'ocean' in the sense of the saltwater sea surrounding the Indian peninsula—at least not in Vedic times. The most thorough academic work on the term as it applies to Vedic scripture comes from Klaus,[41] in which he demonstrates the term did not refer to the saltwater sea. To illustrate its use as a confluence of rivers, examine the following passage, one which Wintzel and Frawley (the latter an advocate of the 'ocean' translation) have divergent views. In *Rig Veda* 7.89.4, we find Vasishta stuck amid the water fjords (समुद्र) but unable to drink.

Rig Veda 7.89.4:

> Thirst found thy worshipper though he stood in the midst of water fjords (*samudra*):
> Have mercy, spare me, Mighty Lord[42]

As Wintzel points out, it did not mean 'ocean' as in a 'saltwater ocean' like those bordering modern India, since the inability to drink is related to Vasishta's dropsy, a punishment he

[37] V.S. Apte, *The Student's Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000), 104.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Cf. *sam*, 'same,' but also 'all, whole, entire.' Ibid., 585.
[41] K. Klaus, Samudrá im Veda, in *XXIII Deutscher Orientalistentag Würzburg, ZDMG Suppl.* VII (Stuttgart, 1989), 367-371; K. Klaus, *Die altindische Kosmologie, nach den Brāhmaṇasdargestellt* (Bonn, 1986). In much later texts, for example, Kalidasa, writing in the 4th century A.D., as most now believe, apparently समुद्र was used for the ocean. Kalidasa, *Raghuvamsa* 8.8: 'Each of his subjects all thought, "Tis me the King loves best!" for none he scorned, just as the sea will be unbigoted towards the hundreds of rivers that rush to join it.' But, as mentioned, this is very late, and not reflective of the earlier meaning in the *Vedas,* despite the epic tradition's impact on Kalidasha's writing.
[42] Trans. Ralph T.H. Griffith, *The Rig Veda*, Vol. 1 (Benares: E.J. Lazarus, 1896).

received.[43] Frawley's view, that the inability to drink implies salty water,[44] totally ignores the context of the hymn and is based on his ultimate desire to demonstrate native Indian (Harappan) culture was the origin of Vedic language and thought,[45] rather than a contribution from a foreign nomadic group intermingling with natives far to the north.[46]

Interestingly, समुद्र, similar to our investigation of *adû*, can also mean 'sealed, bearing a seal, stamped,' when it is combined with *lekha*/लेख, 'a writing, document, written document.'[47] The use as 'seal' or the act of 'stamping' essentially signifies an agreement, testament, or oath, since a seal is the sign of authority or agreement.[48] The idea that the word for water fjords, when combined with writing, would come to mean seal, is therefore indicative of some sacred dimension to water in the Indic tradition, which reinforces the theory of a common origin in the Akkadian tradition. Just as the Greek and Indian accounts bear testimony to this relation between water and oaths/agreements, so too did the earlier Akkadian *adû*.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, it should be clear that in the early Greek tradition leading up to Thales, *ὕδωρ* referred to fresh water (usually seen as inherently divine) unless employing one of two epithets, and such cases were very rare (non-existent in the *Iliad*). This was confirmed by an examination of its uses in Homer, and strengthened by a look at linguistic relatives in other, related languages. Altogether, this analysis certainly suggests we look for a deity associated with freshwater when considering the religious and mythological influences on Thales, and therefore takes us out of the confines of the interpretive tradition that focused largely on Okeanos. As for Styx, we have two preliminary reasons to think his role in shaping Thales' philosophy was insignificant. First, in the Hesiodic tradition Styx is secondary to Okeanos and Tethys, and it seems strange to think that this cosmographical narrative would be a primary mythological influence since it places Okeanos in a more fundamental role. Second, we saw that Homer employed *θεοὶ* in reference to water (adding support to Pinto's position that Thales' statement, 'all things are full of gods,' likewise referred to water as *θεοί*)[49] and this supports the argument for influence from Acheloios, a deity who appears in the world as a multiplicity of deities, *θεοί*, since the rivers of the world are the sinews of Acheloios. Hence, we have our first, but nonetheless significant, piece of evidence supporting the later argument that Acheloios was the primary influence on Thales' notion that water, as *θεοί,* was the *ἀρχή* of *φύσις*—since such a phrase has a clear predecessor in Homer's worldview.[50] But in order to

[43] M. Witzel, Philology vanished: Frawley's Rigveda — I, *The Hindu*, August 6th, 2002.
[44] M. Frawley, Witzel's Vanishing Ocean, *The Hindu*, July 16th, 2002.
[45] M. Frawley, Vedic literature and the Gulf of Cambay discovery, *The Hindu*, June 18th, 2002.
[46] The only instances in which समुद्र does refer to the salt water ocean consists of one potential reference to the Arabian Sea, and another in reference to a mythical, cosmological (salty) ocean. As Wintzel summarizes, it can mean: '1. Confluence of the (Panjab) rivers, 2. Terminal lake (in the Rajasthan/Cholistan desert), 3. Heavenly 'pond,' heavenly 'ocean', 4. Mythical primordial (salty) ocean and the mythical ocean at the end of the world, 5. Some vague notes about a very distant ocean (Arabian Sea?)' (Witzel, 'Philology vanished: Frawley's Rigveda — I').
[47] Apte, *The Student's Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 483, 589.
[48] Ibid., 589.
[49] Pinto, 'All things are Full of Gods,' Soul and Gods in Thales, *passim.*
[50] In Chapter 8 we will begin to discuss Dodona. Dodona was the earliest oracle in all of Greece, and was the location in which sacrifices were regularly made to Acheloios. Herodotus tells us that before the assignment of names and epithets to the gods, the term *θεοί* was employed universally: 'Formerly, in all their sacrifices, the Pelasgians called upon gods without giving name or appellation to any (I know this, because I was told at Dodona); for as yet they had not heard of such. They called them gods from the fact that, besides setting everything in order, they maintained all

bring this argument beyond conjecture, we now need to examine the archaeological proof that Acheloios was in Miletos during Thales' life, the subject of Chapter 6.

the dispositions.' (Herodotus, *Histories* (alt.: *The Persian Wars*) 2.52.1; trans. A.D. Godley, from Herodotus, *The Persian Wars,* Volume I, translated by A.D. Godley, Loeb Classical Library 117 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920)). More, Socrates confirms that the inhabitants of Dodona (Selli and Doves) would communicate with natural objects, as though they (the objects) were gods. See Plato, *Phaedrus* 275b.

Chapter 6

The Physical Evidence

'And it seems to be a sacred place of some nymphs and of Achelous, judging by the figurines and statues.'

-Socrates[1]

Of paramount importance to the discussion of the influence of Acheloios on Thales is exhibiting persuasive evidence that Acheloios was known to the inhabitants of Miletos during Thales' life. That is the basic purpose of this Chapter—to demonstrate that a stater featuring Acheloios was minted in Miletos in the latter years of Thales' life. But in making the case, we will see many other important pieces of artistic and inscriptional evidence that demonstrate the stater is by no means an isolated phenomenon, merely copying an oriental iconography with no significance. The course we will take is fairly straightforward. In the first section, we will look at the early commentary from antiquity concerning the dating of Thales' life, and what recent scholarship has to say about these accounts. Here I will advocate Thales was born in the second half of the seventh century and died in the second half of the sixth century. In the second section, I will present an overview of what we know about Miletos as a mint, a provisional introduction to the Acheloios coin itself (Figure 1), and important textual and archaeological materials that help attribute the coin to Miletos. These materials also demonstrate the Milesians were well aware of Acheloios in the first half of the sixth century BC. In Part III, despite a lack of absolute chronological certainty, I will advocate a date of the mid sixth century for the stater based on the following: (1) The likely date for the origin of coinage and the Acheloios stater's likely relative chronological assignment; and, (2) Some stylistic considerations that suggest a date of no later than 550 BC and link the coin decisively to Miletos. Ultimately, in the final analysis, it will appear that our best option emerging from the extant (albeit fragmentary) evidence suggests that the stater featuring Acheloios was minted in Miletos during Thales' life, in the mid sixth century BC, and is our best physical evidence for the Acheloios-Thales connection.

Thales' Dates

We do not know precisely when Thales was born or when he died, and throughout antiquity we are given many conflicting dates. Some accounts suggest his birth was very early. For instance, Phlegon claims Thales was known in the mid eighth century BC (752 to 749 BC),[2] and Jerome, when translating Eusebius' *Chronicle*, records that Thales was known in 747 BC.[3] Unfortunately, this is not reliable, since his other translation of Eusebius lists Thales as known in 604 BC, and claims also that he lived until the 58th Olympiad (so c. 548 to 545/4 BC).[4] More, in *Praeparatio Evangelica,* also from Eusebius, we are told Thales was born around the 50th Olympiad, so c. 580 to 577 BC,[5] which is wildly inconsistent with everything else we know about Thales' dates. For

[1] Plato, *Phaedrus* 230b-c. Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*
[2] This account comes from the *Suda* θ, 17.1-18.3 (ed. Adler=Th 495). Cf. Wöhrle, *The Milesians: Thales*, 417, note 2.
[3] Jerome, *Interpretatio Chronicae Eusebii-interpretata Eusebii praefatio* 13.9-14.1 (ed. Helm=Th 305).
[4] Jerome, *Interpretatio Chronicae Eusebii-Chron. Canones ad ann. A. Chr. n. 620* 9a9-12 (Th 306).
[5] Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.11.34 (Th 264).

example, because there is an abundance of testimony that Anaximander was a pupil of Thales,[6] and Anaximander's dates are well established in the mid sixth century,[7] a date anywhere in the eighth century is virtually impossible for Thales, and so is a birth date around 580 BC. We can therefore dismiss Phlegon, the first translation given by Jerome, and that from Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*. Nonetheless, there are other relatively early dates that are plausible. Herodotus, as recorded in the *Suda*, says Thales was born c. 640 to 637 BC, and this date finds support in Cyril of Alexander, who claims Thales was born c. 647/640 BC and died 548 to 545 BC.[8]

The only truly late date for Thales' birth is Eusebius' aforementioned date of 580 BC. Aside from the inconsistency with Anaximander's dates, this date is also totally inconsistent with the story of the eclipse, which Thales is said to have predicted. The eclipse is thought to have occurred May 28th, 585 BC.[9] It is first recorded by Herodotus, but with no date.[10] In terms of its veracity, Diogenes Laertius (*Vitae philosophorum* 1.23) records that Xenophanes, Herodotus, Heraclitus, Democritus, and Eudemus all testify to Thales' prediction. Panchenko therefore insists that these accounts should not be taken lightly, since Herodotus is known to have criticized other stories about Thales (e.g., crossing the Halys)[11] and Xenophanes 'had a very critical mind; he ridiculed common views, and criticized Homer and Hesiod as well as Pythagoras.' [12] Despite these supporting testimonies, many scholars (myself included) still think Thales was incapable of predicting an eclipse—perhaps just the year, but, more likely, he was describing celestial mechanics, which is what the astronomer Aristarchus of Samos tells us.[13] In any event, the fact that Thales was associated with the eclipse in very early accounts is useful for dating purposes: He must have been alive and have achieved great notoriety by the time of the eclipse, else these stories would not have surfaced in so many early accounts.

According to Apollodorus, Thales was born in the year of the 39th Olympiad (not 35th), so 624 BC, and died in the year of the 58th Olympiad, so 548 to 545 BC.[14] The actual transmitted text is *τριακοστῆς ἑνάτης Ὀλυμπιάδος* (35th Olympiad, so 640 BC),[15] but the next line in Apollodorus'

[6] For instance, an inscription in the Gymnasium of Tauromenion dating to the second century BC reads: *Ἀναξίμανδρος Πραξιάδου Μιλήσιος ἐγέ[ν]ετο μὲν Θ[αλ]έω* [...] (ed. Blanck). See also Cicero, *Academica priora sive Lucullus* 118 (ed. Plasberg=Th 71); Strabo, *Geographica* 1.1.11 and 14.1.7 (Th 81 & 81); Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes* 3.30 (ed. Mutschmann=Th 140), *Math.* 9.359-60 (Th 143); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.14.63.2 (Th 202); Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies* 1.6.1 (Th 211); Hermias, *Derision of Gentile Philosophers* 10 (Th 230); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.13.1-1.14.1 (Th 236), 1.122B (Th 239); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.79.1-40 (Th 260), 10.14.10-12 (Th 265); Pseudo-Justin Matyr, *Cohortatio ad Graecos* 3.1-2 (ed. Marcovich=Th 291); Themistius, *Oratio* 26.317A-C (ed. Maisano=Th 300); Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 8.2 (ed. Dombart/Kalb= Th 311); 18.47 (Th 315); Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 2.8-9 (Th 329); Pseudo-Galen, *De historia philosophica* 3.1-6 (ed. Diels=Th 391); Simplicius, *In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria* 24.13-16 (Th 410), *In Aristotelis quattuor libros de caelo commentaria* 615.8-21 (Th 431); Frechulf of Lisieux, *Historiae* 1.3.17 (ed. Allen=Th 482a); *Suda*, Lexicon alpha, 1986.1-2 (Th 494); John of Salisbury, *Politicraticus* 7.5 (ed. Webb=Th 540); Eustatius of Thessalonica, *Commentarium in Dionysii periegetae orbis descriptionem* epistola 208.9-17 (ed. Müller=Th 544).

[7] For discussion, see Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 100ff, citing Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 2.1-2 (DK 12 A 1). Apparently, Anaximander was not much younger than Thales and died in the same Olympiad, if we are to believe Apollodorus. Burnet does, see Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 51.

[8] Cyril of Alexander, *Contra Iulianum* 1.14.520D (ed. Burguière/Évieux=Th 373).

[9] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 76.

[10] Herodotus, *Historiae* 1.74 (ed. Ross=Th 10).

[11] Herodotus, *Historiae* 1.75.

[12] Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 33ff. See also O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus,* 126-146.

[13] *P.Oxy.* 53.3710 col. 2.36-43 (ed. Bowen/Goldstein)= Commentary on Homer, *Odyssey* 20.156.

[14] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.37-8 (Th 237=DK 11 A 1).

[15] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.37 (Th 67=Th 237=DK 11 A 1).

testimony claims he (Thales) was seventy-eight years old when he died (*Ἐτελεύτησε* δ' *ἐτῶν ἑβδομήκοντα ὀκτώ*).[16] Thus, there was clearly an inscriptional error at some point, in which $\overline{\epsilon}$ and $\overline{\theta}$ were confused, which KRS claim is a common error.[17] Unfortunately, adjusting for this small error and arriving at 624 to 548/4 BC is not definitive, since, as KRS also explain, 'Apollodorus, then, characteristically placed Thales' death around the epoch-year of the capture of Sardis, his *acme* at the time of the eclipse, and his birth the conventional forty years earlier.'[18] To muddy the waters more, Diogenes also tells us, in the same passage, that Sosicrates claimed Thales was ninety when he died, which, if born in 624, would have him die in 534, well into the second half of the sixth century.[19]

The date of Thales' death is therefore also uncertain,[20] but it is important to note that the only recorded dates we have for his death, from Diogenes and Apollodorus[21] and those that follow them,[22] are after 550 BC, so into the third quarter of the sixth century. Moreover, we have strong evidence that Thales was alive in the second half of the sixth century because he was associated with Croesus in a 'well known' (*πολλὸς λόγος / pollòs lógos*) account about helping the king cross the Halys, which occurred c. 547 BC.[23] If it truly was a 'well known' story among the Greeks, whether or not the story is true and to what extent is irrelevant, for he must at least have been alive for the rumors to have had any semblance of truth and thus accounts for them being so 'well known.' Thus, combined with our recorded dates, Thales apparently died sometime after 550 BC.

Ultimately, because of the dating of the eclipse in relation to Thales and the numerous ancient sources that associate Thales with it in some way, we can say with confidence that Thales was active through the first quarter of the sixth century and potentially well beyond.[24] This is supported by three other pieces of evidence: the fact that Demetrius of Phaleron claims Thales was called the 'first Sage when Damasias was archon of Athens,' and therefore he (Thales) was alive and had a well-established reputation in the years 582 to 580 BC;[25] Thales' association with Amasis, who ruled 570 to 526 BC;[26] and Thales' association with Anaximander, discussed above (this is not to mention his association with Pherecydes, Pythagoras, or any other 6th-century contemporaries). Thus, despite the fact that we cannot know if his birth date is closer to that offered by Herodotus or Apollodorus, we can say that he was born in the second half of

[16] Ibid., 1.38 (Th 67=Th 237=DK 11 A 1).
[17] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 76, note 1.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.38 (Th 67=Th 237=DK 11 A 1).
[20] One interesting study concerns a passage from Plutarch in which it is stated, 'They say that Thales made a similar conjecture. He gave instructions for his burial in an unpretentious and neglected place in the territory of Miletus, predicting that someday that spot would be the market place of the Milesians.' (Plutarch, *Solon* 12.11.1-12.84, Th 114). According to the study, the agora does appear to have been built up on a place that had to be drained in antiquity and was formerly used as a dumping site. See Alexander Herda, Burying a sage: the heroon of Thales in the agora of Miletos, *Rencontres* (2011): 67-122.
[21] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.38.
[22] Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Iulianum* 1.14.520 (ed. Burguière/Évieux=Th 373).
[23] Originally Herodotus, *Historiae* 1.75, but see also Lucian, *Hippias* 2.10-14 (ed. MacLeod=Th 170); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.38; Iohannes Tzetzes, *Commentarium in nubes* 180a.1-b.1 (ed. Holwerda=Th 535); Eustathius of Thessalonica, *Commentarium in Dionysii periegetae orbis descriptionem* 354.12-19 (ed. Müller=Th 545); Thomas Triclinius, *Scholia in Aristophanis nubs* 180 (ed. Koster=Th 561); *Scholia recentiora anonyma in nubs* 180b-c (ed. Koster=Th 586-7).
[24] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 76.
[25] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.22-44 (Th 237=DK 11 A 1).
[26] Plutarch, *Septem sapientium convivium* 2.147A-B (Th 119).

the seventh century and died in the second half of the sixth century, and those parameters will be sufficient for our analysis below.

Miletos as Source of the Stater

An Early Milesian Mint

No one has ever found remains of an actual mint in Miletos dating to the period in which the Acheloios stater was probably minted, but there are good reasons to think a mint existed there in the late seventh to early sixth century BC. There are two reasons for attributing an early mint to Miletos. First, many early electrum coins, perhaps the very earliest coins of all, are found in a region in which Miletos is virtually dead-center, and these coins consist of a fixed weight system based on a stater of 14g.[27] Thus, the weight system has been dubbed the 'Milesian Standard' because of the location of these coin finds.[28] The second reason is that Miletos was an important center of economic activity in the seventh to sixth century BC, and there would have been great demand for coinage.[29] Combining this with the fact that Miletos had a mint since at least the late sixth century BC,[30] it is likely to have existed earlier (whether privately run, state sanctioned, or some combination in those early days).[31] As Greaves puts it:

> It may have been Miletos' close relations to Lydia, as a tribute payer and supplier of mercenaries, that caused it to be one of the earliest states to produce its own coins. Also, Miletos' large capital building projects such as temples, defenses, and ships for the fleet would have encouraged this early use of coin.[32]

Thus, judging from this evidence alone, Miletos was in all likelihood the location of the mint that issued many of these coins based on the 14g stater.[33]

Contact Abroad and Its Significance to Acheloios Iconography

In terms of the Acheloios stater specifically, which was struck on this Milesian standard, there are good reasons beyond its adherence to weight regulations that indicate a Milesian mint. First of all, Miletos engaged in trade with many Mediterranean cultures in the seventh and sixth centuries, and there is extensive evidence for contact with regions in which man-faced bull iconography was extensive: Cyprus, Naukratis, and the Levantine coast up to Northern Syria into Cilicia.[34] These various contacts abroad were longstanding. Although Miletos appears to have been culturally distinct from eastern Anatolia and the Near-Eastern trade routes in

[27] Weidauer, *Probleme der frühen Elekrtonprägung*, 13. For a useful translation of this important work see Dane Kurth, trans., *Problems of Early Electrum Coinage* (2009), independently published and available from the author. Weidauer summarizes here H.A. Cahn, *Knidos: Die Münzen des sechsten und des fünften jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), 183ff.
[28] Cahn, *Knidos: Die Münzen des sechsten und des fünften jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, 183f.
[29] For an overview, see Alan M. Greaves, *Miletos: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2002), chapter 3, especially 96ff.
[30] Greaves, *Miletos: A History*, 98. For the coinage of Miletos from the 5th century to the 1st, see Barbara Deppert-Lippitz, *Die Münzprägung Milets vom vierten bis ersten Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, TYPOS V: Monographien zur antiken Numismatik, Band V (Frankfurt am Main: Schweizerischen Numismatichen Gesellschaft, 1984).
[31] For discussion, see Peter van Alfen, The role of 'the state' and early electrum coinage, in *White Gold: Studies in Early Electrum* (New York: ANS, 2020), 547-568.
[32] Greaves, *Miletos: A History*, 98.
[33] Cahn, *Knidos*, 183ff.
[34] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 2 and 3, also 97-99 for overview of the iconography.

the Early Bronze Age (c. 3100 to 2000 BC),[35] the horizon expands exponentially thereafter. For instance, in the third Late Bronze Age period (c. 1300 to 1100 BC) the city walls exhibit distinct Hittite influence.[36] Three swords of foreign manufacture were also found in Miletos dating to this time period: two from the Near East and one Hittite.[37] In addition, 'In matters of cult, the figurines are strong evidence for Mycenaean cult but Hittite iconography also makes an appearance on one fragment of pottery.'[38] It is in the Iron Age that contacts between east and west markedly increased in the area,[39] and Miletos was an important center of cross-cultural activity, particularly at Kalabaktepe, the Theatre Harbour, and the Oracle at Didyma.[40] Gorman sums up the rationale for the role of trade over agriculture for the Milesians and how this broadened its activity to foreign soil:

> In the tenth through eighth centuries, when the basis of the Ionian economy was still agricultural, the extent of good cropland at the disposal of the Milesians remained severely limited: they simply did not have the space necessary for cultivation on a level comparable to such cities as Ephesos and Kolophon. As long as Miletos remained confined to the resources of its *chore*, its prosperity was tightly circumscribed. Therefore, near the end of the Dark Ages, Miletos turned the focus of its attention away from the hinterland, toward trade and overseas expansion.[41]

Essentially, to a great extent Miletos was geographically determined to extend its reach beyond the shores of Ionia, and it was not long after this time that its interactions with the Near East and other eastern Mediterranean sources begin to appear in the archaeological and textual record more regularly.

Many inscriptions testify to contacts between the western and eastern Mediterranean worlds in the eighth to seventh centuries, which Niemeier conveniently summarized in his study.[42] Some come in the form of Assyrian records that attest to opponents called 'Ionians,' whom the Assyrians faced when expanding west, specifically in Palestine, Phoenicia, North Syria, and Cilicia.[43] For instance, in an inscription about Sargon II we find the following: 'He who caught the Ionians (^{KUR}*Ya-am-na-aya*) out of the midst of the sea, like a fish,' and 'I caught, like fishes, the Ionians who live amid the Sea of the Setting Sun.'[44] Some scholars conjecture that this might refer to Sargon's Cilician campaign of 715 BC, though others think that 'Ionians' here might be a general term used for Greeks.[45] In other documents from Sargon II we find mention

[35] Greaves, *Miletos: A History*, 45.
[36] For discussion, see W.-D. Niemeier, The Mycenaeans in western Anatolia and the problem of the origins of the Sea Peoples, in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition*, edited by S. Gitin, A. Mazar, and E. Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society): 17-65.
[37] B. Niemeier and W.-D. Niemeier, Milet 1994-5, Projekt 'Minoisch-Mykenisches bis Protogeometrisches Milet': Zieltzung und Grabungen auf dem Stadionhügel und am Athenatempel, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (1997): 203-5, Figure 2; Niemeier, The Mycenaeans in western Anatolia and the problem of the origins of the Sea Peoples, 39-40.
[38] Greaves, *Miletos: A History*, 64.
[39] For an excellent overview of the early history to 400 BC, see Vanessa Gorman, *Miletos: Ornament of Ionia, A History of the City to 400 B.C.E.* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), particularly Chapter 2.
[40] Greaves, *Miletos: A History*, 76.
[41] Gorman, *Miletos: Ornament of Ionia,* 47.
[42] For a comprehensive overview of the literature, see Niemeier, Archaic Greeks in the Orient: Textual and Archaeological Evidence, 11-32.
[43] Ibid., 16.
[44] Trans. R.A. Kearsley, Greeks Overseas in the 8th Century BC: Euboeans, Al Mina and Assyrian Imperialism, in *Ancient Greeks West and East*, edited by G. Tsetskhladze (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 121.
[45] I disagree, for reasons I will state below, but see T.F.R.G. Braun, The Greeks in the Near East, in *Cambridge Ancient*

of a man named 'Yamani,' which might mean 'Ionian' and be used in reference to a mercenary soldier.[46]

The identification of these characters as true 'Ionians' is strengthened by other accounts of itinerant archaic Greeks. In Herodotus and Diodorus, for example, we find Ionians and Carians in Egypt when it was under Assyrian domination. (Of course, in Assyria, winged man-faced bulls were utterly pervasive.)[47] The two passages are as follows:

Herodotus, *Histories* 2.152-4:

> Psammetichus did not in the least believe that men of bronze would come to aid him. But after a short time, Ionians and Carians, voyaging for plunder, were forced to put in on the coast of Egypt, where they disembarked in their armor of bronze; and an Egyptian came into the marsh country and brought news to Psammetichus (for he had never before seen armored men) that men of bronze had come from the sea and were foraging in the plain. Psammetichus saw in this the fulfillment of the oracle; he made friends with the Ionians and Carians, and promised them great rewards if they would join him and, having won them over, deposed the eleven kings with these allies and those Egyptians who volunteered.[48]

Diodorus, *The Library of History* 1.66.12-67.2:

> Whether they fell out for this reason or because of the envy which, as mentioned above, they felt towards him, at any rate Psammetichus, calling mercenaries from Caria and Ionia, overcame the others in a pitched battle near the city called Momemphis, and of the kings who opposed him some were slain in the battle and some were driven out into Libya and were no longer able to dispute with him for the throne.
>
> After Psammetichus had established his authority over the entire kingdom he built for the god in Memphis the east propylon and the enclosure about the temple, supporting it with colossi twelve cubits high in place of pillars; and among the mercenaries he distributed notable gifts over and above their promised pay, gave them the region called The Camps to dwell in, and apportioned to them much land in the region lying a little up the river from the Pelusiac mouth; they being subsequently removed thence by Amasis, who reigned many years later, and settled by him in Memphis.[49]

These accounts demonstrate that Ionians and Carians were certainly in Egypt pre-Thales, though there they appear to have found a more hospitable environment, as opposed to their encounters in Cilicia and the run-in with Sargon II. In fact, we have inscriptional evidence from Ionian soil that attests to the good relationship established between these

History, Vol. 3.3: *The Expansion of the Greek World, Eighth to Sixth Centuries B.C.*, edited by J. Boardman and N.G.L. Hammond, 2nd edition (Cambridge: UP, 1982), 1-31.

[46] A.T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1923), 218. For the argument that 'Yamani' is an Assyrian gentilic based on similar contemporaneous names, see, e.g., H. Tadmor, The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 12 (1958): 80.

[47] For an overview, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 5-15.

[48] Trans. Godley, *op. cit.*

[49] Trans. Oldfather, from Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, Volume 1, translated by C.H. Oldfather, Loeb Classical Library 279 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933).

Figure 4: Pottery fragment from Berezan featuring Acheloios, 700 to 675 BC. Author's drawing of an item in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Inv. Б 4619.

Figure 5: Pottery fragment from Berezan featuring Acheloios, 700 to 650 BC. Image courtesy of Archäologisches Museum der Universität Halle. Inv. 421 (Bere 159).

two cultures. Archaeologists have found, at Kale, an Egyptian statue of the Pharaoh Psamtik (Psammetichos) inscribed in Greek and offered as a votive at some sanctuary by a Greek named Pedon. The statue dates to the seventh century, and reads, in a beautiful boustrophedon script, 'Pedon son of Amphimeos set me up as a votive, having brought [me] back from Egypt; and to him Psammetichos, king of Egypt, gave as prizes a golden armlet and a city on account of his valor.'[50] Altogether, these itinerant Greek figures would certainly have had exposure to man-faced bull iconography—especially given the fact that many were mercenaries/guards, because such figures were the leading exponents of man-faced bull iconography into the Greek world.[51]

Acheloios Artifacts

It is in the Archaic Age, not long after these early documented interactions occurred in Egypt and the Levant, that we see evidence of Acheloios in Miletos. The earliest of such artifacts, solidly within Thales' life, are pottery fragments of Ionian type that have a likely Milesian origin. The earliest piece, from the first quarter of the sixth century BC, was found in Berezan, a colony established by Miletos a century earlier.[52] The fragment is missing some elements of the face but what remains, especially the beard, clearly indicates Acheloios (Figure 4).[53] The other fragmentary piece (Figure 5), dating to the first quarter of the sixth century and from the same area, features the human face and beard of a winged Acheloios.[54] These two artifacts are evidence of Ionian awareness of Acheloios at the beginning of the sixth century. More importantly, however—since Berezan was a Milesian

[50] From the Hieropolis Archeology Museum in Pamukkale, Turkey.
[51] See Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, specifically Chapter 2. The literary evidence for Egypt, in particular, is confirmed by an extensive archaeological record in which many artifacts of Egyptian origin have been discovered at Miletos dating to the Archaic period. Cf. e.g., G. Hölbl, Funde aus Milet VIII. Die Aegyotiaca vom Aphroditetempel auf dem Zeytintepe, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (1999): 345-71, and related bibliography.
[52] Eusebius, *Chronikoi Kanones* 95b (ed. Helm).
[53] Isler, *Acheloos,* no. 61.
[54] Archäologisches Museum der Universität Halle, Inv. No. 421; See also Michael Kerschner, Zur Herkunftsbestimmung archaischer ostergriechischer Keramik: die Funde aus Berezan im Akademischen Kunstmuseum der Universität Bonn und im Robertinum der Universität Halle-Wittenberg, *Istanbuler Mitteuling*, Band 56 (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Abteilung Istanbul, 2006), 148, Abb. 21.

Figure 6: Engraved gem from Falerii featuring Herakles and Acheloios, early sixth century BC. Author's drawing of an item from Berlin-Charlottenburg. Inv. FG 136.

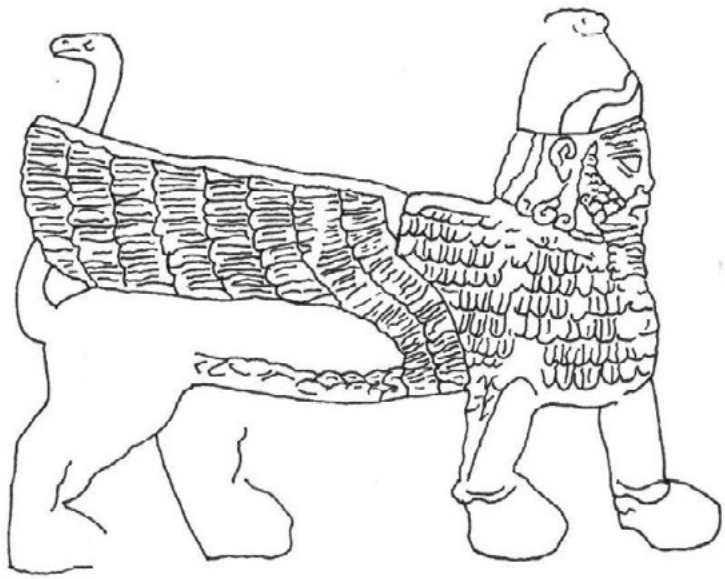

Figure 7: Relief from Sakçagözü, eighth century BC. Author's drawing of the object *in situ.*

colony, that awareness of Acheloios must emerge from Miletos, because the colonists surely did not encounter Acheloios at Berezan upon arrival.[55]

Another artifact we must consider, an Ionian gem (Figure 6), features the first known representation of Acheloios fighting Herakles from the eastern Greek world, and dates to the early sixth century BC.[56] It was found in a tomb at Falerii, in Italy, and attests to the fact that, not only was Acheloios known to the Ionian Greeks at an early date, they were actually distributing

[55] Some 4500 years earlier man-faced bull iconography first appears on the shores of the Black Sea, but there is no evidence it remained in the area over the millennia, having vanished by the end of the 4th millennium. See Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 1, for in-depth discussion, but also 97-9 for a general overview.
[56] Isler, *Acheloos,* no. 291.

Figure 8: Herald's Wall, tenth to eighth century BC. Author's drawing of the object *in situ.*

Figure 9: Ionian askos of Cypriot style, from Emporion, c. mid sixth century BC. Author's drawing of an object in the Museo Arqueológico Provincial, Gerona.

artifacts with his likeness to other (non-colonial) parts of the world. Furthermore, the iconography on this gem features a serpentine-headed extension emerging from Acheloios' back, and is seen on no other representations in the Greek world. However, there is a Hittite statue dating to the eight century BC (Figure 7) which features an androcephalic winged bull with lion paws and an avian head at the tip of its tail,[57] indicating this statue (and others like it) might have influenced the theriomorphic iconography on the Ionian gem. The iconic link is plausible because the statue comes from Sakçagözü, in south-central Turkey, which was the area where Cilicia met North Syria. Thus, the aforementioned Assyrian sources that document 'Ionian' contacts in Cilicia and North Syria in the eighth to seventh century BC may indeed have been true Ionians if this iconic similarity is indeed reflective of influence.[58] In fact, the same tail type is seen on the Herald's wall relief at Carchemish (Figure 8), and is found on a small appliqué from the region.[59] Altogether, the Falerii gem and its likely iconic relatives indicate that the Ionians were exposed to man-faced bull iconography very early, and began producing objects featuring such iconography in the first half of the sixth century—during Thales' life—and distributing them all over the known Mediterranean and beyond.

Two other artifacts featuring Acheloios as a man-faced bull also suggest an early Ionian cult of Acheloios, both dating to the mid sixth century and probably during Thales' life: an *askos* found in Spain but manufactured in Ionia, which exhibits Cypriot influence (Figure 9), and another, similar piece, found in France.[60] We might also note here that Carian craftsmen produced *balsamarii/arybaloi* in the form of the head Acheloios as a man-faced bull, and these date from anywhere between 590

[57] W. Orthmann, *Untersuchungen zur späthethitischen Kunst* (Bonn, 1971); D. Ussishkin, The Date of the Neo-Hittite Enclosure at Sakçagözü, *BASOR* 181 (1966): 15-23.
[58] Niemeier, Archaic Greeks in the Orient: Textual and Archaeological Evidence, 16.
[59] Cf. e.g., MFA Boston 1996.91.
[60] Isler, *Acheloos*, no. 123-4.

Figure 10: Bezel with engraved scarab featuring mask of Acheloios, from Marion, Cyprus, c. seventh century BC. Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC. E-Auction 381, lot 692. Private collection.

and 520 BC, though the very earliest were probably of Etruscan origin.[61] Combined, these objects (the gem, *askoi*, and *balsamarii*) indicate the cult of Acheloios was reasonably well-integrated into Ionian culture by the end of the first half of the sixth century, and so available to Thales.

Although not a Milesian colony, Cyprus is a very important area in the east-west dynamic and there is evidence of extensive contacts between Miletos and Cyprus during the seventh and sixth century.[62] Aphrodite, also known as Kypris, is particularly noteworthy, especially since she was worshipped as a 'sea goddess' in archaic Miletos.[63] This fact, when combined with the strong link between Aphrodite and Acheloios, discussed elsewhere in this book and in my earlier study,[64] also indicates Acheloios was known to the Milesians since at least c. 550 BC, based on the dating of the temple at Didyma.[65] In other words, because we find various Acheloios artifacts at temples to Aphrodite (presumably at Paphos, but certainly elsewhere in

[61] B. d'Agostino, Funerary customs and society on Rhodes in the Geometric Period: some observations, in *Across Frontiers: Etruscans, Greeks, Phoenicians and Cypriots. Studies in Honour of D. Ridgway and F.R. Serra Ridgway*, edited by E. Herring and I. Lemos, Accordia Specialist Studies on the Mediterranean (London: Accordia Research Institute, 2006): 57-69.

[62] M. Spataro and A. Villing, Scientific Investigation of Pottery Grinding Bowls in the Archaic and Classical Eastern Mediterranean, *British Museum Technical Research Bulletin* 3 (2009): 89-100; A. Villing, Funde aus Milet I. Zwei archaische Schüsselformen, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (1999), 189-202. Paphos, in Cyprus, appears to have featured Acheloios on its coinage in the last quarter of the sixth century. See, e.g., George F. Hill, *A Catalog of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, Greek Coins of Cyprus* (London: The British Museum, 1904), 35, no. 1-3; Pl. VII, no. 1-3.

[63] For this position, see A.M. Greaves, Miletos and the sea: a stormy relationship, in *The Sea in Antiquity*, edited by G.Oliver, T. Cornell, R. Brock and S. Hodkinson (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2000): 39-61.

[64] Discussed in this book in chapters 10-12**,** but see especially Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 17-25. For the ancient accounts, see Empedokles, *Fr.* 118; Sophokles, *Trachiniae, passim*; and Plato, *Phaedrus* (the entire dialogue, which largely concerns *eros*, takes place in a shrine to Acheloios). Pausanias records worship of Aphrodite at the mouth of the Achelous River near Oiniadai. See Pausanias 10.38.12; for discussion, see Alexander Nagel, A river ran through it: Circulating images of ritual and engaging communities in a cave in Aitoloakarnania, in *Cave and Worship in Ancient Greece: New Approaches to Landscape and Ritual,* edited by Stella Katsarou and Alexander Nagel (London: Routledge, 2021), 118.

[65] Greaves, *Miletos: A History*, 82; cf. Apollodorus, *The Library* 3.1.2. It is interesting to note that Aphrodite was known by her epithet *Oikus* on Zeytintepe (the Milesian site of the temple), indicating the use of localized epithets was operative in Miletos in the Archaic Age. This suggests that the 'local embodiments of Acheloios' is relevant to Thales' understanding of the gods.

Figure 11: Lapis lazuli Acheloios pendant, c. seventh to fifth century BC, probably from Naukratis. Author's photo. Private collection.

Figure 12: Lapis lazuli Acheloios pendant (view of bottom). Author's photo. Private collection.

Cyprus,[66] and also at Naukratis[67]), it is likely that Acheloios accompanied her at Miletos as well, particularly because she was associated with the sea. In fact, there is a Cypriot bezel that features an engraved gem with the bearded, horned head of Acheloios, which probably dates to mid to late seventh century Marion (Figure 10),[68] and attests to the early presence of the iconography in Cyprus during a time in which it had direct contact with Miletos, specifically.[69] I mention this piece on top of the long history of androcephalic bulls on the island because of the date and the distinct use of a mask of Acheloios. Indeed, it was likely worn by a priest or 'prophet'—perhaps the very same that were instrumental in the distribution of the iconography.[70]

Another important artifact that indirectly links Acheloios to Miletos during Thales' life is a lapis lazuli figurine of Acheloios as a man-faced bull, said to be *Vorderasien* and allegedly dating to the first millennium BC (Figure 11).[71] It has a geometric pattern on its base (Figure 12). The piece emerged on the market and has never been discussed in any literature. In my view, it was produced in Naukratis, with whom the Milesians had extensive contacts. Naukratis, of course, was an area allegedly given to the Greeks by

[66] For example, see the bearded man-faced bull centaur, c. 750 to 600 BC. (E. Gjerstad, *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition. Finds and Results of the Excavations in Cyprus*, Vol II (Stockholm: The Swedish Cyprus Expedition, 1934-1937), 710F, Pl.228-5, no.1122.); a bronze candalabrium from the 6th century BC (V. Karageorghis, Chronique des fouilles et découvertes archéologiques à Chypre en 1961, *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, Vol. 86, livraison 1 (1962): 345, Figure 24.); various faience masks of Acheloios (one from Amathus, site E, Tomb 88, BM no. 1894,1101.271). Cf. also G. Clerc, Démons Cornus, *La Necropole d'Amathonte. Tombes 110-385. Études chyprioteS*, Vol. XIII (Nicosia, 1991), 100-102, No. T.242/20.2 and 242/21.1.); a larger terracotta mask (BMC no.1894,1101.202, V. Karageorghis, *The Coroplastic Art of Ancient Cyprus*, Vol. III (1991), 117, no.33, Pl.LXVIII:1); or the statuettes of priests wearing man-faced bull masks (See A. Ciasca, Le Protomi e le Maschere, in *I Fenici* (Milano: Bompiani, 1988), 356). The evidence is analyzed in Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 2.

[67] E.g., Isler, *Acheloos,* no. 126-139

[68] Private collection. The attribution to 7th century Marion is based on clear stylistic similarities between the Acheloios piece and known bezels from Marion. See, for example, Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/ Israel: von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit : Einleitung*, Orbis biblicus et orientalis, Series Archaeologica, Volume 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1995), 109, esp. Figure 197.

[69] Greaves, *Miletos: A History*, 28, 35, and especially 99; Gorman, *Miletos: The Ornament of Ionia,* 137-142 (all cities with the exception of Amathus were allied with the Ionians during the Ionian revolt, hence evidence of a reasonably well-founded relationship); John Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas: Their Early Colonies and Trade,* Fourth Edition (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 74.

[70] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 2.

[71] Private Collection.

Figure 13: Lapis lazuli bird pendant, Naukratis, seventh to third century BC. Author's drawing. British Museum Collection. Inv. 1888,0601.58.

Amasis, and Herodotus confirms Milesians were among the founders.[72] Kerschner argues that Miletos had a predominant role in its founding,[73] and it is often listed as a colony. In any case, the site was inhabited by Greeks from at least the last third of the seventh century.[74] Helping with the attribution of the Acheloios figurine to Naukratis is a small lapis lazuli bird (Ibis?)[75] with square base, about the same size, which was excavated at Naukratis and dates as early as the beginning of the seventh century (Figure 13). Two other pieces are also noteworthy: a small, lapis lazuli cat-headed cobra from the same period, about the same size as the bird and the Acheloios,[76] and another, slightly smaller lapis lazuli bead in the form of a hippopotamus.[77] As a result of these other lapis lazuli pieces, Naukratis seems to be the most likely place of origin for the lapis lazuli Acheloios.

In Isler's 1970 monograph he listed fourteen small *aryballoi* in the form of the head of Acheloios, made of faience, and manufactured in Naukratis.[78] He dates all of these c. 560 to 540 BC. Recently, another came to market (Figure 14).[79] Isler also dates this piece c. 560 to 540 BC.[80] Similar Naukratian *aryballoi* have been found as far away as Tarquinia, in Etruria.[81] Moreover, the fact that a larger Acheloios *balsamari* was found in the temple of Aphrodite itself[82] suggests that these smaller *aryballoi* were also manufactured in or around that same temple.

[72] Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.178: 'Amasis became a philhellene, and besides other services which he did for some of the Greeks, he gave those who came to Egypt the city of Naucratis to live in; and to those who travelled to the country without wanting to settle there, he gave lands *where they might set up altars and make holy places for their gods*. Of these the greatest and most famous and most visited precinct is that which is called the Hellenion, founded jointly by the Ionian cities of Chios, Teos, Phocaea, and Clazomenae, the Dorian cities of Rhodes, Cnidus, Halicarnassus, and Phaselis, and one Aeolian city, Mytilene. It is to these that the precinct belongs, and these are the cities that furnish overseers of the trading port; if any other cities advance claims, they claim what does not belong to them. The Aeginetans made a precinct of their own, sacred to Zeus; and so did the Samians for Hera and the Milesians for Apollo.' Trans. Godley, *op.cit.*, emphasis mine.

[73] M. Kerschner, Perspektiven der Keramikforschung in Naukratis 75 Jahre nach Elinor Price, in *Naukratis: Die Beziehungen zu Ostgriechenland, Ägypten und Zypern in archaischer Zeit. Akten der Table Ronde in Mainz, 25.-27. November 1999*, edited by U. Höckmann and D. Kreikenbom (Möhnesee: 2001): 69–94.

[74] Alexandra Villing, Naukratis, Egypt and the Mediterranean world: a port and trading city, in *Naukratis: Greeks in Egypt*, British Museum Online Research Catalog, edited by A. Villing et al. (London: The British Museum), 4f.

[75] Incidentally, Acheloios is occasionally paired with a bird, sometimes an Ibis.

[76] BMC AN1888.175.

[77] BMC AN1888.174.

[78] Isler, *Acheloos*, no. 126-139.

[79] Private collection.

[80] Private correspondence, Spring 2019.

[81] Isler, Acheloos, no. 112.

[82] BMC collection 1888,0601.752.d, said to be of 'Ionian' manufacture but excavated at Naukratis.

Figure 14: Naukratian aryballos in the form of the head of Acheloios, c. 560 BC. Image courtesy of TimeLine Auctions, Ltd., edited by author. Auction 012019, lot 0014. Private collection.

When we reflect on the earlier discussion of Aphrodite as a sea goddess in Miletos, a larger picture begins to emerge: These temples of Aphrodite would have helped facilitate the encounter of various cultural groups around the Mediterranean, particularly the Milesians, Cyprians, and Naukratians, and helped spread the cult of Acheloios.[83]

Ultimately, the lapis lazuli figurine and *aryballoi* are additional evidence for the early presence of Acheloios in an area in which Thales was known to travel. Indeed, the evidence suggests that Thales' associations with 'prophets' from Egypt need not indicate an influence of the Egyptian deity Nūn (primordial water), but perhaps Acheloios, especially since oracular activity is a fundamental aspect of his (Acheloios') cult.[84] (Acheloios was not isolated to just Naukratis within Egypt; archaeologists have found an Acheloios *aryballos* as far south as Nubia.)[85] The first account of Thales traveling to Egypt comes from Hero, probably of the first century BC,[86] and there are many other sources that attest to Thales' presence in Egypt, spanning thousands of years.[87] A few are worth noting in particular. The first of interest is the account of Iamblichus of Chalcis concerning Pythagoras, in which we learn that Thales had been educated by prophets from Memphis (about 80 miles

[83] Intercultural contacts between various communities that ultimately formed a *koine* was suggested in Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 41, in which the various western Mediterranean cultures had contact with the eastern cultures employing the iconography of the bull man and man-faced bull, ultimately producing Acheloios. Presumably these Aphrodite cults, stemming from Cyprus, played an essential role. There is also some evidence that Aphrodite was worshipped at Dodona. See Diego Chapinal-Heras, *Experiencing Dodona: the development of the Epirote sanctuary from archaic to Hellenistic times* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 108f.

[84] The use of 'prophets' is indeed significant, since Acheloios is closely related to oracular knowledge. See Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 67, specifically in regards to 'astragalomania.'

[85] Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas,* 127, Figure 148.

[86] 'Geometry was first discovered by the Egyptians. Thales brought it to the Greeks.' Hero, *Definitiones* 136.1 (ed. Heiberg=Th 92). Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit*.

[87] Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.2 (ed. Reinach=Th 108); Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 9-10.354D-E, 9.10-14; 34.364C-D, 33.24-34.3(ed. Sieveking=Th 115 and 116); *Septem sapientium convivium* 2.146D-E, 301.2-5 (ed. Paton/Wegehaupt/Gärtner= Th 118); Pseudo-Plutarch, *Placita philosophorum* 1.3.875D8-F5 (Th 147); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.14.62.4 and 1.15.66.2 (Th 202 and Th 204, respectively); Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 9.17.2-3 (Th 214); Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, *Ad nations* 2.4.18 (Th 217); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.24 (Th 237); Iamblichus of Chalcis, *Vita Pythagorae* 2.11-12 (ed. V. Albrecht=Th 249); *In Nicomachi arithmeticam introductionem* 10-11 (ed. Klein= Th 253); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.4.17-18, 10.7.10, 14.14.1 (Th 262, Th 263, and Th 271, respectively); Theodoret, *Graecarum affecionum curatio* 1.12 (ed. Canivet=Th 326); Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Iulianum* 1.18.524C-D (Th 374); Proclus Diadochus, *In primum Euclidis Elementorum librum commentarium* Prologus 2.65.3-11 (ed. Friedlein=Th 380); Simplicius, *in Aristotelis quattuor libros de caelo commentaria* 522.13-18 (Th 426); Ṣiwān al-ḥikma, 13-17, 176-187, 398-416, (Th 499, Th 500, and Th 501, respectively); *Al-Bīrūnī, Al-āṯār al-bāqiya 'an al-qurūn al-ḫāliya* 27.14-21 (ed. Sachau=Th 507); Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Ta'rīḫ al-ḥukamā'* 107.7-14 (Th 551); Theodorus Metochites, *Semeioseis Gnomikai* 14.2.2 (ed. Hult=Th 557c); Hesychius (?), *Scholia in Platonem: Res publica* 600A1-10 (ed. Greene=Th 578).

Figure 15: Electrum hekte from Kyzikos, fifth century BC. Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC. CNG Auction 105, lot 186. Private collection.

downriver from Naukratis) and Diospolis/Thebes (still further down the Nile).[88] To get to either he surely would have passed Naukratis, stopping for provisions and rest. Most importantly, another source, Plutarch, claims that while in Egypt, Thales associated with Niloxenus of Naukratis, which connects him to the very location in which Acheloios appears.[89] Niloxenus was an emissary of Amasis II, the Egyptian King that allegedly allotted Naukratis to the Greeks.[90] Of course, we cannot be certain of Thales' activities in Egypt, but it is hard to believe he was in Egypt and not at Naukratis, and particularly the temple of Aphrodite, since there was another 'sister' temple of Aphrodite in Miletos. Moreover, the Acheloios coin—the sole example in existence, was found in Egypt, indicating it was spent by a prominent individual from Miletos who traveled there![91] Thus, the Egyptian evidence reinforces the other evidence from Ionia and Miletos and indicates the historical context was one that allowed for Thales to have exposure to Acheloios both at home and abroad.

Section Conclusion

As a segue back to the coin, we now have sufficient reason to state confidently that a Milesian mint issued the Acheloios stater, beyond its adherence to the Milesian standard. There is extant textual and archaeological evidence demonstrating contact between Miletos and its oriental neighbors (who for their part frequently employed man-faced bull iconography), and the many Ionian, Milesian, Cypriot, and Egyptian artifacts featuring Acheloios indicate a widespread *koine*, perhaps founded upon the cults of Aphrodite at Miletos, Paphos, and Naukratis. Add to this the fact that no coinage featuring Acheloios comes from anywhere in Lydia proper at any point in time,[92] and that another Milesian colony, Kyzikos, produced coins that feature Acheloios (from the early fifth century, e.g. Fig 15), and the case is very persuasive.

[88] Iamblichus of Chalcis, *Vita Pythagorae* 2.11-12 . For distances, see *Barrington's Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, Map no. 74 and 75.
[89] Plutarch, *Septem sapientium convivium* 2.146D-E (Th 118).
[90] Plutarch, *Septem sapientium convivium* 2.147A-B (Th 119). This passage and the last indicate Amasis had heard of Thales' sayings, supporting the idea that Thales' achieved notoriety by the time Amasis was ruler (570 to 526 BC).
[91] Ute Wartenberg, Was there an Ionian Revolt Coinage? Monetary Patterns in the Late Archaic Period, in *White Gold* (New York: ANS, 2020): 604.
[92] A comprehensive survey of Lydian coinage from Archaic times until well into Roman times is in preparation by Dane Kurth (personal correspondence with author confirmed the absence of Acheloios types).

The Stater's Date

Now that we are confident that the Acheloios stater was struck in Miletos, dating the stater to Thales' life will solidify the archaeological basis of our argument for influence. Jameson does not say much about the coin aside from a general attribution in which he assigns it to Miletos and describes its basic features: it is an electrum stater featuring a winged man-faced bull, kneeling, surrounded by a dotted border which his wing transgresses, above the border and to the right of the wing is a small dolphin oriented left.[93] In his later work, Seltman offered a wide, early date range, c. 690 to 630 BC, based on his date for the origin of coinage to the early seventh century BC.[94] Thus, Seltman's date is likely before Thales was ever born.[95] Weidauer, who wrote much later, was reluctant to give any precise dates, but she too dates the birth of coinage early, in the first half of the seventh century BC, so she would also likely date this type before or within Thales' lifetime.[96] With these views in mind Isler's date of sometime in the first half of the sixth century BC seems reasonable, since it adjusts for a later chronology for the origin of coinage that has gained traction since Seltman's study.[97] Gardner, in his identification of the coinage of the Ionian revolt, placed no pre-revolt electrum issues (like the said stater) after 550 BC, and in Jenkins' catalog of the Gulbenkian collection, where the coin now resides, he assigned a date of mid sixth century.[98] In *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*, Dr. Nicola Sisci and I also suggested a date of c. mid sixth century based on style, at the time unaware of Jenkin's dating.

Relative Chronology

As one likely gleaned from the broad date range among the earlier commentators above, the dating of this coin is very much dependent on the dating of the origin of coinage itself, a debate that is still unsettled.[99] There are, generally speaking, three schools of thought: those who date the first coins very early, at the beginning of the seventh century;[100] those who date them in the middle, around the middle to third quarter of the seventh century;[101] and those who date them late, at the end of the sixth century or even well beyond.[102] I cannot tackle such a topic here, but will at the outset commit to what I believe is the most plausible date, the third to fourth quarter of the seventh century, for the start of coinage, following Kerschner, Prochaska, and Konuk.[103] This is not just because it suits my thesis. It is worth noting this is the

[93] R. Jameson, *Monnaies grecques antiques* (Paris: Feuardent, 1913), 361, no. 1505. He adds that the coin is from the Avierino collection and unique.
[94] Charles Seltman, *Greek Coins* (London: Methuen, 1933), 27, note 1.
[95] Seltman, *Greek Coins*, 13ff, 18, 27.
[96] Weidauer, *Probleme der frühen Elekrtonprägung*, *passim*.
[97] Isler, Acheloos, no. 14.
[98] Jenkins and Castro Hipólito, *A catalogue of the Calouste Gulbenkian collection of Greek coins*, no. 720.
[99] For the most recent, comprehensive look at early electrum coinage, see the essays within Peter Van Alfen and Ute Wartenberg, eds., *White Gold: Studies in Early Electrum Coinage* (New York: American Numismatic Society and The Israel Museum, 2020).
[100] Most notably D.G. Hogarth, *Excavations at Ephesus: The Archaic Artemisia* (London: British Museum, 1908).
[101] Most notably M. Kerschner and W. Prochaska, Die Tempel und Altäre der Artemis in Ephesos ind ihre Baumaterialien, *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen archäologischen Institutes in Wien* 80 (2011): 73-154. For a more recent study, see M. Kerschner and K. Konuk, Electrum Coins and Their Archaeological Context: The Case of the Artemision of Ephesus, in *White Gold,* 191-262.
[102] For a late date, after the turn of the seventh to sixth century, see A. Bammer, Gold und Elfenbein von einer neuen Kultbasis in Ephesos, *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen archäologischen Institutes in Wien* 58 (1988): 1-23.
[103] Kerschner and Prochaska, Die Tempel und Altäre der Artemis in Ephesos ind ihre Baumaterialien, 144-5, in which the geological and archaeological evidence determines that the area in which the coins were found dates to before 600 BC (cf. no. 3-5 in the conclusion). Cf. also M.Kerschner and K. Konuk, Electrum Coins and Their Archaeological Context:

Figure 16: Electrum sixth stater, striated type, c. 650 to 600 BC. Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC. CNG Auction 105, lot 339.

view advocated in the keynote address of François de Callataÿ at the White Gold conference (Israel, 2012), and is the most widely-held view by numismatists and archaeologists.[104]

If coins originated sometime in the mid to late seventh century, this Acheloios type was probably not among the very earliest, since we do not see this style of reverse punch technique among the coins from the (presumably) earliest layer of the Central Basin deposit.[105] The reverse is characterized by a rectangular punch in the middle of the flan and two square punches on either side, struck using the same die at the same rotation.[106] We do however find a very similar reverse style at Artemision in the Pot Hoard and among the miscellaneous finds (Robinson no. 26-46 and no. 60-67, respectively), which supports the idea of a relatively early mintage.[107] In fact, Weidauer's catalog starts with a striated stater that exhibits a similar reverse punch technique (cf. Figure 16).[108] If we follow Robinson's dating that all Artemision deposits were in the ground by 600 BC or slightly later (and so the origin of coins a generation before),[109] these tripartite reverse punches are early indeed, and suggest to me a date of no later than the mid sixth century for the Acheloios stater, especially since no coins with these reverse punch characteristics have been formally excavated in a deposit reliably dating to after 550 BC.

Two recent studies help further confirm this attribution to mid sixth-century Miletos. The first is by Hilbert. In his study,[110] he confirmed that the same die punch used on the Milesian stater with the reverted lion head was used on the 'leaping lion' staters (cf. die punch LR4/U12).[111] Wartenberg suggested, in her recent work,[112] that the leaping lion group 'has punches that

The Case of the Artemision of Ephesus, in *White Gold,* 191-262.

[104] For the address, see François de Callataÿ, WHITE GOLD: An Enigmatic Start to Greek Coinage, *ANS* 2 (2013):6-17; Peter Van Alfen and Ute Wartenberg, Introduction. White Gold and the Beginnings of Coinage: An Introduction to the Current State of Research, in *White Gold: Studies in Early Electrum Coinage*, 1-16.

[105] E.S.G. Robinson, The Coins from the Ephesian Artemision Reconsidered, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 71 (1951): Plate XXXVIII, no. 1-28.

[106] For discussion, see Weidauer, *Probleme der frühen Elekrtonprägung*, 49-58, esp. 57.

[107] Robinson, The Coins from the Ephesian Artemision Reconsidered, Plate XXXVIII, 26-46 and 60-67, respectively.

[108] Weidauer, *Probleme der frühen Elekrtonprägung*, no. 1. Figure image features a sixth stater of the same type.

[109] Robinson, The Coins from the Ephesian Artemision Reconsidered, 165.

[110] R. Hilbert, *Die Elekrtonprägung von Milet. Nomismata.* Historisch-Numismatische Forschungen 9 (Bonn: Habelt Verlag, 2018), 64.

[111] Wartenberg, Was there an Ionian Revolt Coinage? Monetary Patterns in the Late Archaic Period, 603.

[112] Ibid.

more closely resemble the winged (man-faced) bull series...'[113] but then claims, in the section concerning the 'winged bull' coin (i.e., the Acheloios stater) that it 'shares the same punch set LR1-M1-R1,'[114] which features the joined protomes of a lion and bull. Her study seemingly used a photo of the plaster cast from Weidauer's study, but an examination of the high-resolution photos provided by the Gulbenkian museum suggest that the assertion here (namely, LR1-M1-LR1=LR6-M6-LR6) is unjustified. Indeed, Dr. Wartenberg has confirmed to me that this was an error. Nonetheless, her suggestion that the leaping lion and Acheloios types have very similar reverse punches (they are not the same) is important, because the striking similarity clearly suggests the same mint: Miletos—as confirmed in Hilbert's study.

Ionian Revolt

As mentioned above, these 'blazon' types might be dated to the period before the Ionian revolt, following Gardner's initial classification of that coinage.[115] Gardner himself, who dated the revolt to c. 500 BC, did not place these pre-revolt types past that 550 date.[116] And even if we accept a post 550 BC mintage for the stater, that still allows six or more years to overlap with Thales, if indeed he died around 546/4 BC. Moreover, new evidence suggests that many of the coin types of the Ionian Revolt were not actually revolt coinage, and date instead to the third quarter/beginning of the fourth quarter of the sixth century,[117] hence this 'predecessor' would fit nicely where Gardner originally suggested. [118]

Style

The style of the Acheloios on the coin (Figures 1a & 1b) also indicates a relatively early date—if it was minted after 550, it was not by much.[119] It is clearly archaic and derived from oriental types. It looks unlike other man-faced bulls on coinage that are relatively close in date (e.g., from Paphos (?), or slightly later, from Rhegion or Gela, cf. Figures 17-19). [120] All of those have distinct pointed beards whereas on this coin the beard appears more like an overly-pronounced chin. Moreover, on the Acheloios stater the eye is greatly oversized, reminiscent of Neo-Hittite iconography. Examples in Neo-Hittite art are pervasive, but see Figure 20 for a close-up of a face from a relief.[121] The style of the face on the coin is helpful in determining that the Acheloios stater is not directly related to the Paphos(?)-Rhegion-Gela chain of influence.[122] It also implies that it is not as late as those other, more refined issues, which begin c. 520 BC.

[113] Ibid., 603.
[114] Ibid., 604.
[115] Percy Gardner, The coinage of the Ionian Revolt, *JHS* 31 (1911): 156.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Wartenberg, Was there an Ionian Revolt Coinage? Monetary Patterns in the Late Archaic Period, 569-640.
[118] Jenkins and Castro Hipólito write the following: 'The specific mint of this type cannot be determined; it is certainly Ionian, however, and along with a number of other types may, it has been suggested, be a coinage of Miletos. If so, this coin could be one of the predecessors of the group nos. 726-29 below [the 'Revolt' coinage]. Date, perhaps mid-sixth century.' Jenkins and Castro Hipólito, *A Catalogue of the Calouste Gulbenkian Collection of Greek Coins*, 81-2. Like Gardner, Jenkins and Castro Hipólito date the 'revolt' coinage 500-494 BC, but still place this coin c. 50 years earlier. The supposed new dating would lend further support for this date.
[119] Wartenberg, Was there an Ionian Revolt Coinage? Monetary Patterns in the Late Archaic Period, 601, who suggests this type was produced 'just after' the mid-6th century.
[120] Hill, *A Catalog of the Greek Coins in the British Museum, Greek Coins of Cyprus*, 35, no. 1-3 (Cyprus); N.K. Rutter, *Historia Numorum: Italy* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), 187, no. 2468 (Rhegion); Jenkins, *The Coinage of Gela* (Gela).
[121] From Sakçagözü. For discussion of the monuments, see Orthmann, *Untersuchungen zur späthethitischen Kunst*; Ussishkin, The Date of the Neo-Hittite Enclosure at Sakçagözü, 15-23.
[122] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 69-74.

Figure 17: Silver stater from Cyprus, c. 520 BC. Image courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Inv. Luynes.3006 (43-45-32).

Figure 18: Silver third-stater from Rhegion, c. 510 BC. Image courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Inv. Fonds général 1964.

Figure 19: Silver didrachm from Gela, c. 490 BC. Image courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Inv. Fonds général 454.

Figure 20: Relief statue from Sakçagözü, example of 'classic' oversized eye. Author's drawing of object *in situ*.

Still, it is definitely a man-faced bull. Although Wartenberg remarked that it appears more monstrous than Classical depictions of Acheloios, leading her to claim it might be a Shedu,[123] the human nose is still the defining feature,[124] and since there is a horn and bovine ear, it is clearly a man-faced bull. Of course, Acheloios was at times a terrifying figure, so the rather sharp teeth that appear on this Acheloios should not be surprising. Indeed, on the aforementioned contemporaneous Ionian amber pendant found at Falerii (Figure 6), we find this monstrous dimension: Herakles is battling Acheloios as a man-faced bull, and a serpent-headed tail emerges from Acheloios' back (Acheloios could appear as either a serpent or a man-faced bull, so the sharp teeth on the coin seem to be the artist's way of incorporating the serpentine dimension). Ultimately, then, because the Acheloios coin seems to exhibit stronger Neo-Hittite influence on the facial features,[125] an earlier, pre-550 date seems more appropriate.

The style of Acheloios' wing is another indication of an early date, since it is reminiscent of earlier styles emerging in the eighth to seventh century. The wing of Acheloios protrudes from the body in a diagonal line but turns up somewhat abruptly at the tip of the wing. On the Amathus bowl, which features a depiction of mercenaries wearing Ionic helmets battling alongside Assyrians, we find a similar style of wing on the central sphinxes (Figure 21).[126] The bowl is Cypro-Phoenician and dates to the late eighth to early seventh century BC.[127] Similarly, a group of objects from the British Museum, dating to Carchemish in the seventh century, features wings exhibiting a similar style (Figure 22).[128] Also at Carchemish, dating to the eighth century, the 'upturned' wing style is present, though not as conspicuously, on a 'four-winged genius,'[129] somewhat reminiscent

[123] Wartenberg, Was there an Ionian Revolt Coinage? Monetary Patterns in the Late Archaic Period, 604. She follows Jenkins and Castro Hipólito, *A Catalogue of the Calouste Gulbenkian Collection of Greek Coins*, 81-2.

[124] One anonymous reader commented that the coin features a 'wolf-headed bull,' presumably arriving at this position because the creature has sharp teeth and a large eye. A look at the high-resolution images reveals that it is unquestionably a man-faced bull, as all other numismatists have described it to date. The human nose is the most distinct feature supporting this identification, in addition to the bovine ear and horn. Moreover, a bull with a wolf's head exists nowhere in any Greek or Near Eastern iconography or mythology.

[125] They had been absorbed by the Assyrians by the end of the eighth century. For the most recent account of Neo-Hittite civilization, see Trevor Bryce, *The World of Neo-Hittite Kingdoms: A Political and Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), especially 253ff.

[126] Niemeier, Archaic Greeks in the Orient, 21, Figure 4.

[127] R.D. Barnett, The Amathus Shield-Boss Rediscovered and the Amathus Bowl Reconsidered, in *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, 1977* (1977), 164-69.

[128] BMC 116232. For discussion, see Carel J. Du Ry, *Art of the Ancient Near and Middle East* (New York: Abrams, 1969), 173.

[129] See A. Gilibert, *Syro-Hittite Monumental Art and the Archaeology of Performance: The Stone Reliefs at Carchemish and Zincirli in the Earlier First Millenium BCE* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), catalog no. 'Carchemish 35.'

Figure 21: Amathus Bowl, late eighth to early seventh century BC. Author's drawing of an item in the British Museum Collection. Inv. 123053.

Figure 22: Gold ornament from Carchemish, c. eighth century BC. Author's drawing of an item in the British Museum Collection. Inv. 116232 (part of).

of the 'winged daimon' stater[130] also struck on the Milesian standard and sharing the same reverse pattern as the Acheloios type (Cf. Figure 24).

The Carchemish examples are particularly interesting because we know the 'Ionians' were in Syria from the aforementioned Assyrian records. Archaeologists have confirmed the presence of western Mediterranean people at Carchemish in the form of a bronze greave of western manufacture and dating to c. 630 to 550 BC, nearly perfectly coinciding with Thales' life,[131] and, more importantly, an Archaic Greek bronze shield featuring a large gorgon in the center, from the second half of the seventh century.[132] The gorgon head is obviously reminiscent of the many gorgons found at the temple of Aphrodite at Zeytintepe, or all along the Sacred Way, which extended from the Delphinion of Miletos to the temple at Didyma.[133] This evidence reinforces the idea that the 'Ionians' mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions were indeed the people from Ionia proper (probably Miletos). More importantly, the Carchemish evidence suggests that the iconography on the coin might have been adopted right around this time, hence within the first half of the sixth century.

[130] Weidauer, *Probleme der frühen Elekrtonprägung*, no. 175-176.
[131] E. Kunze, *Olympische Forschungen XXI: Beinschienen* (New York: De Gruyter, 1991), 24-40, 99f.
[132] E. Kunze, Schildbeschläge, in *V. Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1956): 48-50.
[133] For additional discussion and maps, see Gorman, *Miletos: The Ornament of Ionia,* 183-5, maps 3-5.

Figure 24: Electrum trite, winged-daimon type, c. 600 to 550 BC. Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC. CNG Auction 85, lot 435.

Figure 25: Electrum 1/24th stater, Milesian standard, c. 600 to 550 BC. Image courtesy of Pecunem, Auction 9.

The Relative Significance of Acheloios on Archaic Milesian Electrum

Ultimately, Acheloios was clearly important enough to the Milesians (or a prestigious Milesian family) to find his way onto coinage—He must have been a familiar figure, because it wouldn't make sense to put a totally insignificant foreign deity on coinage.[134] For his part, Seltman considers it a 'blazon' or personal seal of the local magistrate or an important family, and agrees it was inspired by oriental types.[135] I see no reason to disagree with his initial assessment. Indeed, we have other Milesian Acheloios coins.[136] While the information about these

[134] Contra, see Wartenberg, Was there an Ionian Revolt Coinage? Monetary Patterns in the Late Archaic Period, 604, who suggests it is a Shedu, an eastern deity that took the form of a man-faced bull in antiquity. This is inaccurate in my estimation, and based on her misunderstanding of Acheloios as an exclusively 'Greek' deity.
[135] Seltman, *Greek Coins*, 26-7.
[136] There is also a myshemihekte (1/24th stater) type struck on the Milesian standard that features Acheloios as a man-faced bull (Figure 25). Three examples exist, none from controlled excavations. With these additional specimens, we have three more coins that feature Acheloios likely emerging from the same mint. See, e.g., Pecunem, Auction 9

additional specimens is even more fragmentary than the Acheloios stater, they are supportive of our case for a distinct cult of Acheloios operative in Miletos during Thales' life. Whatever the exact details (we'll discuss further in the Conclusion to this book), Acheloios featured on early electrum coinage indicates, at the very least, that he was known in Miletos during Thales' life, because even if the stater was minted slightly after 544 BC (which I find unlikely), surely the god was not completely new when he appeared on the coinage minted in Miletos.

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined many pieces of evidence that demonstrate Acheloios was known to the Milesians during Thales' life. Because the argument is multifaceted, I would like to take a minute to review the essentials. Thales was likely born in the second half of the seventh century BC and died in the second half of the sixth century BC. We know this because of the date of the eclipse and his related notoriety in the first quarter of the sixth century, combined with all the accounts of his death that attest to a date in the second half of the sixth century. It is also clear that Miletos had connections to many distant places, including the Near East, the Levant, North Syria/Cilicia, Cyprus, Egypt, and various Milesian colonies. Because man-faced bull iconography was pervasive in many of these areas, it is likely the Milesians adopted the iconography through these contacts sometime in the seventh century. In fact, Miletos seems to have produced objects featuring Acheloios as a man-faced bull as early as the first half of the sixth century BC and distributed these to its colony at Berezan in the northern Black Sea region. Furthermore, at Naukratis, also a Greek colony of Miletos, we find Acheloios *aryballoi* very early, c. 560 BC, and these are later found all over the Mediterranean. We also determined that the Acheloios stater was likely minted in Miletos, since it was struck on the Milesian standard and, based on the aforementioned evidence, the Milesians were apparently fond of Acheloios. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the date of the Acheloios stater is likely sometime around the mid sixth century. This dating was based on the likely date of the origin of coinage, the characteristics of the reverse punch, certain iconic elements that indicate an influence from earlier Hittite, Syrian, and Cypriot sources, and the re-dating of the coinage traditionally associated with the Ionian revolt, which this type preceded. As a result of all this evidence, it is safe to say Acheloios was known in Miletos during Thales' life, and, furthermore, that coins featuring Acheloios were apparently struck there while Thales' was still alive. With this crucial point established, we can now look to Thales' philosophical activity for further evidence of the Acheloios-Thales connection.

(November 2013), lot 192. Recently, a very early Milesian stater came to market which was described as featuring the forepart of a man-faced bull. It would date to c. 600 BC and be the oldest extant Acheloios on coinage, but the image is too unclear to be certain. See Roma, Auction XXI, lot 165.

Chapter 7

Philosophy *Ex Nihilo*?

'It is perhaps unclear whether this view about nature is early and ancient, but in any case Thales is said to have expressed himself thus about the first cause.'

-Aristotle[1]

Some have argued that Thales developed his cosmology based exclusively on observations of the natural world, and there is therefore no justification for saying that he was influenced by the cult of Acheloios and its surrounding *mythos*, or really any form of Greek myth or religion, for that matter. Patricia O'Grady is the leading contemporary voice in this school of thought.[2] In her chapter concerning myth in relation to Thales, O'Grady discusses the difference between the fourth and fifth editions of Hermann Diels' *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker.*[3] In earlier editions, passages from Homer, Hesiod, Pherecydes and others were included in the supplementary volumes that followed the original text, the work itself beginning with Thales. But Diels desired to rework the entire corpus so that these pre-philosophic thinkers came first, and Walther Kranz achieved this goal in the revised fifth edition.[4] Moving these mythopoeic and theological thinkers to the front illustrated a progression in Greek thought from a more primitive, mytho-religious account of nature to a more rigorously structured, demythologized account of nature.[5] For O'Grady, this editorial shift resulted in 'the failure to acknowledge justly, and to appreciate fully, the work and originality of Thales. In overestimating the influence of traditional religious beliefs they have failed to investigate other possible motivational factors or to develop all aspects of his achievements.'[6] While there might be some truth to the idea that Thales' achievements have been overshadowed by an emphasis on the role of myth,[7] O'Grady's view is downright radical, claiming that Thales was not influenced by myth at all, and that anyone who thinks Thales was influenced by myth is just plain wrong: 'Thales did not derive his thesis on the nature of matter from either Greek or non-Greek mythological

[1] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b-984a. Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*

[2] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus, passim*. I have yet to find a review carefully dismantle the core aspects of her theory and feel obligated to do so, since she is being cited in major works. Joe McCoy, in his introduction to a collection of papers on the Presocratics, writes that O'Grady's study is 'exhaustive.' (See Joe McCoy, Introduction, in *Early Greek Philosophy: The Presocratics and the Emergence of Reason,* edited by Joe McCoy (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 2013): xv). Aside from a fairly robust bibliography and some important and persuasive arguments about the veracity of some of Aristotle's accounts, her work radically reduces the first philosopher to fit an anachronistic framework. A similar account of Thales is presented in Constantine J. Vamvacas, *The Founders of Western Thought--The Presocratics. A Diachronic Parallelism between Presocratic Thought and Philosophy and the Natural Sciences*, trans. by Robert Crist, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science Volume 257 (New York: Springer, 2001). The author ignores virtually all critical commentary on Aristotle.

[3] Cf. e.g., Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Griechisch und Deutsch* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Bucchhandlung, 1903).

[4] Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Fünfte Auflage heraugegeben von Walther Kranz (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1934-1938).

[5] Certainly, Diels was influenced by Hegel, who ridiculed the arrangement of Diogenes Laertius and advocated a progression in Greek thought. This view is expressed most accurately in G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, ed. by Karl Hegel (1840).

[6] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletos*, 72.

[7] Cf. e.g. Hölscher, Anaximander und die Anfage der Philosophie, 257-277.

traditions. Those commentators who believe that Thales inherited his views from Greek or from Near Eastern sources are wrong.'[8] The purpose of this chapter, simply put, is to: (1) counter O'Grady's position, and, (2) reexamine the case for a progression from more mytho-religious thinking to more philosophical thinking, thereby laying the groundwork for establishing a more multifaceted understanding of the role of myth and religion in relation to Thales.

O'Gradys Position

Overview

Before we get into the nuances, it will be useful to provide a basic summary of O'Grady's account of Thales. O'Grady characterizes Thales as a rigorously inquisitive thinker who examined nature in order to determine the *ἀρχή*.[9] Following some readings of Aristotle, she classifies Thales as a material monist[10] in the sense that water is the constitutive cause of all things.[11] She also advocates that Thales attributed to water an intrinsic force that was responsible for motion, which Thales called 'soul or gods,'[12] but that he meant neither as traditionally understood in customary language. O'Grady's problem, to oversimplify a bit, is that she applies too rigid a 'scientific'[13] mindset onto an archaic thinker. For instance, her illustration of Thales is that of a man who is more-or-less plagued with Cartesian doubt:

> 'What is this World all about? If the gods are not the all-powerful beings most people believe them to be, what is it that brings about change, and what is the universe made of?' And as he sat, pondering these questions, a ship, heavy in the water, berthed in the port. How could fully laden ships, heavier than water, stay afloat, and could that phenomenon be related to the Earth floating on water?...So many questions, but Thales was no dreamer. He was neither a mystic nor an eccentric, but a practical man, seeking answers to the questions about nature...[14]

But why does she feel licensed to paint this picture of Thales? How do we know that Thales doubted the gods, to put it generally? She seems to be playing off of a passage from Aristotle, in which he claims philosophy emerges from wonder: 'for it is because of wondering that men began to philosophize and do so now.'[15] But how do we know Thales was wondering strictly about the ultimate principle(s) of nature and not about the underlying truth of competing myths and religions,[16] since before Thales' alleged contribution myths explained nature? As

[8] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 71.
[9] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus,* Chapter 3.
[10] There is a differentiation in the literature now between a reductionist material monism of the sort O'Grady proposes and a 'reservoir' monism, in which water is envisioned as the source of all things and that to which all things return, yet not all things *are* water. For the terminology, see Barney, History and Dialectic in *Metaphysics* A 3, 69-104, esp. 79ff.
[11] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 29-41, in which water is construed as the originating, constitutive, and final cause of all things; but see also Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical*, 7-8, in which water is the originating, underlying, and final principle of all things.
[12] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 121-125.
[13] Here meaning primarily empirical. O'Grady emphasizes, with repeated references to empirical observation, the scientific element of early 'natural philosophy.' For the idea that science could not have emerged via observation, see K. Popper, Back to the Pre-Socratics, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1958-9): 1-24.
[14] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 1.
[15] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982b13-14.
[16] For the view that Thales' philosophy was prompted by competing cosmogonies, see Kurt von Fritz, Der Beginn universalwissenchaftlicher Bestrebungen und der Primat der Griechen, *Studium Generale* 14 (1961) 546-583, but

another philosopher once put it, it is not '...as if Thales had suddenly dropped from the sky, and as he bumped the earth ejaculated: "Everything must be made of water!"'[17] And yet, that is precisely the situation O'Grady paints: Thales as pure scientist emerging *ex nihlo*. It will be useful now to highlight some of the most serious problems in her work to see how she misinterprets the fragmentary evidence and presents a dubious picture of Thales.

Conflating Religion and Myth

It should be clear to anyone reading O'Grady's book that she operates largely on the basis of a fundamental misunderstanding of the difference between mythology and religion.[18] As Robert Parker appropriately summarized in his work, before the 20th century there was a pervasive conflation of myth and religion such that, 'the study of Greek religion was therefore the study of the gods as represented in mythology.'[19] This conflation of religion and myth paints an inaccurate picture, however, and Parker's work is a testimony to the complexity of Greek religion in its difference from myth. (He follows a tradition initiated by Martin Nilsson).[20] It will help to give some quick examples to show that this earlier view is demonstrably false. For instance, we know that one city in antiquity might worship a figure in a particular way (so, for example, Miletos' cult of Aphrodite *Aphrogeneia*), whereas another city might honor a totally different form of the god (so, for example, Pantikapeion's cult of Aphrodite *Nauarchis*).[21] In fact, some deities were worshipped in various ways within the very same city. In Tarsos, for example, citizens worshipped a distinct Hellenic Herakles right alongside Sandan, his Anatolian equivalent, and sometimes—but not always—the two were conflated.[22] The major didactic myths do not account for virtually any of these local idiosyncrasies, which we learn about through other pieces of ancient literature, and also art, archaeology, epigraphy, and other sources. Claiming that Thales was not influenced by myth, without virtually any qualification, therefore neglects to consider the substantial religious and cultic influences on Thales that lie outside the didactic myths. This is a rather serious oversight.

It is worthwhile to exhibit some examples of how this conflation appears in her work, because it demonstrates that O'Grady's methodology totally recharacterizes Thales. In specific terms, O'Grady claims:

> The theories of Thales resulted from considerations other than mythological influences. There is no evidence that he ever attributed generation to any of the gods of Olympus, and his view was not ancient and primitive. It was new and exciting, and the genesis of conjecture about natural phenomena.[23]

especially 548-549; Kurt von Fritz, *Grundprobleme der Geschichte der antiken Wissenschaft* (Berlin, 1971), *passim*; Karl Popper, The Myth of the Framework, in *Essays in Honour of A Schilpp*, ed. by Freeman E. La Salle (1976) 23-48. See also Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 17.

[17] Quoted from Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 39, referring to Francis Cornford, who made the comment in 1907. Unfortunately, a reference was not provided. See also Bernabé, 'The Primordial Water: Between Myth and Philosophy,' 425, who objects to the idea that Thales was searching for something to fill this empty idea of *ἀρχή*.

[18] Cf. e.g., O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus,* 3, 75, 78. Specific passages will be examined below.

[19] Robert Parker, *On Greek Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 22-3.

[20] M. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* I (Munich: Bern, 1941).

[21] A.M. Greaves, The Cult of Aphrodite in Miletos and Its Colonies, *Anatolian Studies* 54 (2004): 28f.

[22] See Chapter 11. See also my recent essay, which was based on that chapter: Molinari, Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and the Apotheosis of Herakles: The Importance of Acheloios and Some Numismatic Confirmations, 1-29, but specifically 16ff.

[23] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 75

Here, O'Grady assumes that ancient and primitive views are entirely encompassed in didactic myth, with no mention of Greek religion here or virtually anywhere else in the text. With this conflation, she is therefore free to jump to the conclusion that Thales had new, bold ideas about nature that were not influenced by earlier thinkers. Yet, Aristotle himself acknowledges, in the *Metaphysics*, that the idea of *ὕδωρ* as an *ἀρχή* might be ancient and primitive: 'It may perhaps be uncertain whether this opinion about nature is primitive and ancient, but Thales at any rate is said to have declared himself thus about the first cause.'[24] O'Grady's commensuration of all things ancient and primitive to the 'Olympian' deities is therefore a fairly significant oversimplification, one that conveniently shifts the burden of proof away from O'Grady. A few quick examples to counter this specific claim: Okeanos was highly abstract in antiquity, not to mention a titan, not an Olympic god.[25] And even though Aristotle himself says that some claimed Thales derived his thesis from Okeanos, Tethys, and Styx,[26] O'Grady completely dismisses this potential explanation because of much later thinkers like Xenophanes and Heraclitus (arguments we will visit later). Likewise, Hesiod's Chaos was certainly not anthropomorphic and was seemingly even more abstract than Okeanos, yet Chaos is mentioned nowhere in her text despite its potential aquatic dimension.[27]

O'Grady's conflation of religion and myth culminates in claims such as, 'The factors which were influential in the development of Thales's theories of nature were not the traditional concepts of his society.'[28] Here the conflation is quite clear. But the real problem is that nowhere does O'Grady assess the actual religious cults operative in Miletos. At most, O'Grady states, '... the Greeks never worshipped Oceanus and Tethys and, with the exception of Rhodes, traces of cult followings for Helios are few and uncertain.'[29] Leaving aside the fact that a mythological character need not be worshipped to have influence, the cult of Acheloios was in Miletos,[30] and Acheloios was an object of cult worship all throughout the greater Greek world (see Macrobius, citing Ephorus re Dodona, for instance).[31] In fact, Acheloios' worship as a cult deity marks a significant differentiation from Okeanos, who appears often in literature but rarely in cult.[32] Thus, the fact of the matter is that O'Grady's position presupposes a very juvenile mythological and religious understanding for Thales in which all Greek religion and mythology are encompassed in the didactic myths of the Olympic gods, and this viewpoint stems from O'Grady's own lack of proper understanding of the matter.

'All Things Are Full of Gods'

Another relevant point of attention is that O'Grady dismisses Thales' statement 'all things are full of gods' [33] as totally devoid of religious content.[34] She does this because if it were

[24] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 984a1-3.
[25] Cf. e.g., Homer, *Iliad* 14.200 ('from whom the gods are sprung'); 14.244 ('from whom they all/all things are sprung'). For Okeanos as imaginary extension of the sea, see Beaulieu, *The Sea in the Greek Imagination*, *passim*, but especially 45-46, 52-53, and 62-65.
[26] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b30.
[27] For analysis of a watery Chaos, advocated by the Stoics, see Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 36.
[28] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 3.
[29] Ibid., 78.
[30] The archaeological evidence is presented in this book, Chapter 6, but see also Isler, Acheloos, no. 2, 4 (a vase fragment and an electrum stater).
[31] Ephorus, *FgrH* 27= Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.18.6.
[32] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 33.
[33] Aristotle, *De anima* 411a7.
[34] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, Chapter 7.

religious, and meant gods as traditionally understood (deities), it would indicate Thales had influences other than a pure desire to understand the natural processes of an impersonal world (cf. Seaford's understanding of philosophy analyzed in Chpt. 2). She insists, rather, that the statement refers to 'a kinetic force which is necessarily inherent in water and which, therefore, is permeated throughout the entire cosmos.'[35] I've discussed elsewhere in this book, following Pinto,[36] how this view is anachronistic, but here I'd like to focus on refuting O'Grady's implied position that Thales was irreligious, since she claims Thales was only using 'common language' to make a point.[37] There are accounts of Thales that suggest he was a fairly devout religious patron. One such example is the story of the golden tripod. As the story goes, the tripod was uncovered by some fisherman and when a few young Milesians could not agree on who would keep the treasure, they asked the Oracle of Delphi, who said, 'Offspring of Miletus, you are asking Phoebus about a tripod? Who is the first of all in wisdom? I proclaim the tripod to be his.'[38] It was then given to Thales, who refused the honor and gave it to another Sage, and eventually after passing through the hands of many folks who thought they were unworthy, returned to Thales. Rather than keep it, he dedicated the tripod to Didymean Apollo, and inscribed the following:

Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.29, 69-70=Callimachus, *Iambus* 1.52-77:

> To the one who rules the people of Neilus, Thales
> presents me, this prize of excellence which he twice received.[39]

That seems to be the actions of a humble and pious individual, whose position was that Apollo, not himself, was 'first in wisdom.'[40] And this story is not isolated. Also recounted in Diogenes, Thales is credited with the saying, when asked if a man could do wrong without the gods knowing, 'Not even if he is only thinking [of it].'[41] Thus, even if these stories are exaggerations, the fact that Thales was described this way indicates he was known in antiquity as a pious man, and this is likely reflective of reality. To think that he scoffed at the gods in the (alleged) manner of Xenophanes or Heraclitus is imprudent and unjustified, and it is therefore important for the passage 'all things are full of gods' to be considered in its religio-historical context, which O'Grady neglects to do.

Hittite and Near Eastern Influence

O'Grady also overlooks the extensive evidence of Hittite influence in the area, claiming, 'There is nothing to suggest Milesians adopted Hittite ideas.'[42] But there is an abundance of evidence of Hittite influence in Miletos, beginning as early as the Late Bronze Age.[43] In fact, in her analysis of various cuneiform tablets found at Hattusa, the Hittite capital, Gorman concludes

[35] Ibid., 4.
[36] See Pinto, 'All things are full of gods': Souls and Gods in Thales, 243-261.
[37] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus,* 117-121.
[38] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.28, 60-61. Trans. Pamela Mensch, from Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers,* Trans. by Pamela Mensch, ed. By James Miller (Oxford: UP, 2018).
[39] Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[40] This notion of only the gods being wise, specifically as it relates to Thales, will be illustrated by Plato in the *Phaedrus.* For discussion, see Chapter 12.
[41] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.36, 149-150. Cf. Th 96, Th 207, Th 564.
[42] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 77.
[43] Greaves, *Miletos: A History*, 64f.

that Miletos passed between Mycenaean and Hittite control, which would undoubtedly impact later generations of Milesians.[44] More, this influence is not limited to practical things like the construction of walls, but permeated various aspects of Milesian life, including art and religion.[45] For instance, archaeologists found a krater made in Mycenaean style but employing Hittite iconography, a clear example of the merging of the two cultures in burial ritual.[46] A look at the iconography of early Milesian electrum indicates further overlaps, as discussed in Chapter 6.

In a similar manner, O'Grady dismisses the potential influence of Near Eastern peoples. She claims that there are 'common themes of water as origin' that many groups hold, and some of these groups, like Mesoamericans, had no contact with the Mediterranean cultures influencing Thales.[47] It is certainly true that the basic characteristics of water are conducive to an originating philosophical cosmology just as they are conducive to religion and myth, since water is clearly a primary source of nourishment and purification. But the fact that there are common responses to nature does not preclude Near Eastern influence on Thales. In fact, there is extant evidence, exhibited elsewhere in this book, that Thales was exposed to various foreign cultures and mythologies. For example, Thales travelling to Egypt to learn from the prophets, and recommending others do so;[48] Thales' possible Phoenician ancestry;[49] and likewise Chaldean and Babylonian influence on Thales.[50] This does not include the mountains of evidence of Near Eastern, Egyptian, and Cypriot contacts in Miletos before and during Thales' life, conveniently summarized by Greaves.[51] Thus, Thales undoubtedly had exposure to Near Eastern and Egyptian creation myths and religious practices in which water was positioned more or less as the origin of all things, and that exposure is an important point to recognize when discussing potential cultural influences—as both von Fritz and Popper do (cf. the Conclusion to this book, concerning the 'problem situation' at the origin of philosophy).

Ultimately, O'Grady is so concerned with basic tales of the Olympic pantheon or dismissing Near Eastern religion altogether that she does not look for actual evidence of mythological and cultic influence in Miletos, which was neither 'orthodox' Olympian[52] or 'Near Eastern,' but had its own local cults that, although influenced by outside factors, were distinct from them.[53] Essentially, O'Grady's work is a Procrustean bed: Thales is butchered to fit her idea that he was a pure, rational scientist, developing all of his theories through a rigorous investigation of impersonal nature, completely divorced from both myth and religion, which O'Grady unjustifiably fuses together.

[44] Gorman, *Miletos: The Ornament of Ionia,* 27ff.
[45] Greaves, *Miletos: A History*, 64f.
[46] Gorman, *Miletos: The Ornament of Ionia*, 30-1.
[47] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 78f
[48] Iamblichus of Chalcis, *Vita Pythagorae* 2.11-12(Th 249).
[49] Democritus, Fr. 68 B (Th 237).
[50] Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.2 (ed. Reinach=Th 108); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.7.10. (Th 263=Th 108)
[51] Greaves, *Miletos: A History, passim*
[52] For the concept of 'orthodoxy' in relation to Greek religion in general, see Parker, *On Greek Religion*, 36f.
[53] A glance through her bibliography reveals a lack of attention to research in this particular area of inquiry.

Xenophanes and Heraclitus

O'Grady's justification for dismissing myth (and thus religion, too) is laid squarely on two passages, one from Xenophanes and the other from Heraclitus. Briefly, O'Grady assumes that, because Xenophanes and Heraclitus criticized Homer for depicting anthropomorphic gods as the controllers of nature, Thales must have had a similar lack of regard for the gods, too.[54] Xenophanes, for instance, is referred to by Timon as, 'nearly free of vanity, denouncer of Homer's deceits,'[55] and described by Diogenes as 'condemning Homer and Hesiod and disparaging what they say about the gods.'[56] But in terms of Thales and Xenophanes sharing a similar philosophy, Xenophanes was only said to admire Thales' work in astronomy (concerning the eclipse).[57] In the other passage from Diogenes, Xenophanes is said to have contradicted the doctrines of Thales and Pythagoras.[58] O'Grady even suggests this might refer to Thales' position on water or soul, though her understanding of both concepts is erroneous.[59] Xenophanes might have contradicted Thales and Pythagoras precisely for their less scientific, more esoteric thoughts, not simply because he (Xenophanes) disagreed with the attribution of *ὕδωρ* as the ultimate principle. O'Grady ignores this possibility. And since there are serious problems with Aristotle's account concerning the 'materialist' origin of philosophy,[60] these other explanations warrant deeper consideration.

The case for Heraclitus is similar. O'Grady points out that Heraclitus criticized Homer and Hesiod, and if Thales' theories were like those mythological narratives, Heraclitus would not have followed Thales in advocating a natural philosophy.[61] In fact, Heraclitus said of Homer that he 'ought to be flung out of the contests and given a beating.'[62] Here my objection is clear: just because Thales' philosophy was different from its mythological predecessors, it does not mean he was not influenced by myth. In other words, Thales could have offered a different, nominally demythologized account of the *ἀρχή*, thereby gaining the admiration of Heraclitus, and still have developed his opinion analogously from myth and religion. This fairly simple point is overlooked by O'Grady when she says, 'From what we know of his contemporaries and the esteem in which he was held by later philosopher-scientists we can conclude that Thales's mind was not attuned to the mythopoeic traditions.'[63] But we cannot 'conclude' that Thales was not attuned to mythopoeic traditions because Heraclitus thought highly of him, for Heraclitus himself says, 'the lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither speaks out nor conceals, but gives a sign,'[64] revealing O'Grady's tendency for oversimplification.

[54] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletos*, Chapter 5.
[55] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 9.18.
[56] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 9.18-19.
[57] Xenophanes, Fr. 21 B 19 DK=Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.23 (Th 7 & Th 237). In her usual style, O'Grady suggests Thales met Xenophanes: 'Indeed, the young Xenophanes may have listened to the old Thales, and have heeded his opinions.' O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 74.
[58] Xenophanes, Fr. 21 A 1 DK= Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 9.18.11-12 (Th 6 & Th 243).
[59] I follow Pinto, who argues, convincingly, that *θεῶν* in Aristotle refers to water. Pinto, 'All things are full of gods': Souls and Gods in Thales, 243-261. For coverage, see Chapter 3, above, and Chapters 9 and 12, below.
[60] See Chapters 2 and 3. Cf. also Snell, Die Nachrichten über die Lehren des Thales und die Anfänge der griechischen Philosophie- und Literaturgeschichte, 170-82; Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*,54ff; Frede, Aristotle's Account of the Origin of Philosophy, 9-44; Tell, *Plato's Counterfeit Sophist*, Introduction.
[61] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 75.
[62] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 9.1=DK B42.
[63] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 81.
[64] Heraclitus, *Fr.* 43; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 209.

Pythagoras

Another essential point is that O'Grady completely ignores one of Thales' most important contacts, Pythagoras. According to a few authorities Thales was quite fond of Pythagoras. In Iamblichus of Chalcis' *Vita Pythagorae*, for instance, we learn that 'he [Thales] encouraged him [Pythagoras] to sail across to Egypt and especially to converse with the priests at Memphis and Diospolis.'[65] It is well known that Pythagoras was concerned with the soul,[66] was said on one account to speak to rivers (!),[67] and focused most of his attention on religious rituals.[68] His association with mathematics is secondary to his association with purification and mysticism.[69] It is awfully convenient for O'Grady to overlook Pythagoras in this regard, especially since the omission suits her thesis. Surely, the fact that Thales and Pythagoras had similar views indicates we look again at O'Grady's reliance on Xenophanes and Heraclitus to assess Thales' religious sentiment. And when we do, it seems she has overextended some evidence and reduced to nothing evidence of the contrary.

Anaximander

Finally—What about Anaximander? He is traditionally seen as the closest predecessor of Thales. He didn't have a belligerent attitude towards the Homeric conception of divinity. In fact, Cicero says, 'For Anaximander, gods were born, but the time is long between their birth and their death; and the worlds are countless,'[70] indicating that his abstract *ἄπειρον* did not do away with the notion of anthropomorphic gods at all. Even Thomson, pioneer of the Neo-Marxian school, would not dismiss the mythological components to Presocratic thought.[71] Instead of anachronistically attaching the seemingly harsh views of Xenophanes and Heraclitus to Thales we might instead look at those philosophers closest to him, Pythagoras and Anaximander, both of whom indicate a continued appreciation for a more esoteric conception of gods in relation to nature. As Guthrie rightly states, 'They did not discard in a generation all pre conceptions arising from a mythical or anthropological outlook.'[72]

Conclusions

Ultimately, O'Grady claims that 'Thales never attributed the organization or control of the cosmos to the gods,'[73] despite the fact that he said 'all things are full of gods.' Her position fails to recognize that one could assign a richly divine substance as the governing origin yet not provide a mythological account of it or give it a proper name, which I'll argue elsewhere is

[65] Iamblichus of Chalcis, *Vita Pythagorae* 2.11-12 (Th 249). Cf. Iamblichus of Chalcis, *De communi mathematica Scientia* 21 (ed. Klein=Th 252), Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.4.17-18 (Th 262), Michael Psellus, *Opuscula logica, physica, allegorica, alia* 3.31-35 (ed. Duffy=Th 514).
[66] Cf. e.g., Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae* 19, or Xenophanes, Fr. 7, both of which discuss metempsychosis in relation to Pythagoras.
[67] Aristotle, Fr. 191.
[68] For ancient commentary on the Pythagorean way of life, see Plato, *Republic*, 600a; Isocrates, *Busiris*, 28. See also Geoffrey Lloyd, Pythagoras, in *A History of Pythagoreanism*, edited by Carl A. Huffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1-22.
[69] Carl A. Huffman, Pythagoras, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/pythagoras/.
[70] Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.10.25.
[71] See Thomson, *The First Philosophers*, 156ff.
[72] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 44.
[73] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 73.

precisely what Thales achieved.[74] Instead, she insists on a strict dichotomy between myth and philosophy, claiming, 'Thales was impressed by the developments he saw in water and there is no need to suppose any mythological influence at all.'[75] But since there is little evidence for this view beyond a small segment of Aristotle's problematic framing of the origin of philosophy, one in which he openly speculates, she simply shifts the burden of proof to those arguing for a mythological influence, then fails to actually review the evidence supporting such a position. Clearly, there is a serious need to revise this reductionist assessment of Thales in which he is presented as a 'scientist' who abandoned the gods.

Toward Thales the Philomythos

That there was a gradual transition from mythopoeic articulations about the cosmos to a more rational account that had to some degree moved away from the conventions of myth and traditional religion, and that Thales, being part of this movement, was influenced by his mythological and theological predecessors and contemporaries, is acknowledged by many scholars. Indeed, it would seem rather irresponsible to look at Thales in a cultural vacuum without recourse to earlier thinkers. This is why Herman Diels desired to shift the supplementary material to the front of his corpus; this is why Kirk, Raven, and Schofield begin in the same fashion;[76] McKirahan likewise follows suits for the same reason,[77] as does Giovanni Reale.[78] It is, to put it simply, common sense that there are quasi-philosophical elements appearing throughout earlier thinkers' works, which are 'significant preludes to the sort of attempt to explain the world that began with Thales.'[79] Moreover, recognition of these forerunners does not undermine Thales' achievement. Instead, it properly frames it so that we can see its authentic character and structure.

Pre-Philosophic Thinkers

There are elements of acute or shrewd rationality, as opposed to whimsical storytelling, even in Homer. Odysseus, for instance, is remarkably clever but his skills are aimed at practical affairs. As KRS put it, 'The Homeric conception of Odysseus...is of a man capable, in most ways at least, of philosophy—distinguished not so much by "cunning" as by the power of analyzing complex circumstances and making rational choices as a result.'[80] However, in Homer, there was not by any means the clear systematization of deities that we find later, nor any significant, well-articulated notion that might be considered a philosophical account of nature and man in character and structure (i.e., not specifically concerned with ultimate principles). Even in the descriptions of Okeanos, which we will discuss at great length in the next chapter, 'The evidence does not show that there existed in Greece at a comparatively early date a systematic doctrine of the cosmological priority of Okeanos.'[81]

[74] See specifically Chapter 9.
[75] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 80.
[76] Kirk, Raven, Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 7-72.
[77] McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 7-19.
[78] Reale, *From the Origins to Socrates,* 5-34.
[79] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 7.
[80] Ibid., 73.
[81] Ibid., 16.

Nonetheless, Francis Cornford did much to highlight some important religious themes gleaned from the old myths that helped promote the philosophical mindset. For instance, *μοῖρα* (*moîra*), translated as 'fate,' but also as 'part' or 'allotted portion,' in Cornford's reading, 'is not a mere blind and senseless barrier of impossibility: it is a moral decree—the boundary of right and wrong.'[82] Here the abstract ethical boundary applies even to the gods, and as such, we have *μοῖρα* representing 'the apportionment to each god of his or her province, status, or privilege.'[83] It is this type of conceptual parameter, later emphasized in Hesiod, for example, in which we can see elements of a philosophical account.

In Hesiod's *Theogony*, we thus naturally find a fairly rigorous cataloging of deities, emerging from Chaos. The systematization is thoroughly unlike Homer, who offered no such clear account, and for that alone Hesiod holds a unique place. But the notion of Chaos sets him even further apart. The text is worth reviewing.

Hesiod, *Theogony* 116:

> Verily first of all did Chaos come into being, and then broad-bosomed Gaia [earth], a firm seat of all things for ever, and misty Tartaros in a recess of broad-wayed earth, and Eros, who is fairest among immortal gods, looser of limbs, and subdues in their breasts the mind and thoughtful counsel of all gods and all men.[84]

Chaos could refer to primordial water. Zeno of Citium and the Stoics, for instance, traced *Χάος* back to *χέεσθαι*, the latter referring to that which is poured.[85] It might also have meant 'formless matter.'[86] More interesting still is KRS's discussion of the verb usage in the passage, supporting Cornford's argument that Chaos referred to a 'gap between earth and sky [that] came into being.'[87] As KRS explain, the use of *γένετ'* (*génet'*) rather than *ἦν* (*hên*) implies that '*Χάος* was not the eternal precondition of a differentiated world, but rather a modification of it.'[88] In any event, it is apparent that in Hesiod, who wrote about a generation after Homer, we have a more refined articulation of divinity with his *Theogony* and, more, his cosmogony indicates a slightly more abstract and delineated approach to the origin of things, whatever the exact details.

Pherecydes of Syros, who is said to have been jealous of Thales[89] and dates nearly contemporaneously, is also worth mentioning. His major contribution is that he wrote about the gods using prose, and is the first ever to do so. In fact, Aristotle gives Pherecydes specific attention in the *Metaphysics*.

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[82] Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, 16.
[83] Ibid., 16.
[84] Translation Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 35. Greek text: *ἦ τοι μὲν πρώτιστα Χάος γένετ', αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα Γαῖ' εὐρύστερνος, πάντων ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ ἀθανάτων, οἳ ἔχουσι κάρη νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου, Τάρταρά τ' ἠερόεντα μυχῷ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης, ἠδ' Ἔρος, ὃς κάλλιστος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι, λυσιμελής, πάντων δὲ θεῶν πάντων τ' ἀνθρώπων δάμναται ἐν στήθεσσι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλήν.*
[85] Ibid., 36, citing *SVF* I, 103, and related commentary. See also Bernabé, The Primordial Water: Between Myth and Philosophy, 432f.
[86] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 36.
[87] F. Cornford, *Principium Sapientiae* (Cambridge, 1952), 194f. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 38.
[88] Ibid., 39.
[89] Pherecydes, Fr. 2 (ed. Schibli)=Suda Lex. Phi 214.1-9; Pherecydes Fr. 58 (ed. Schibli); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 2.46; Aristotle, *Fr.* 21.1 (ed. Gignon).

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1091b8:

> ...since the 'mixed' theologians, those who do not say everything in mythical form, such as Pherecydes and certain of the others, and also the Magi, make the first generator the *best* thing. (emphasis original translation)[90]

The *ἄριστον τιθέασι* (*áriston tithéasi*) for Pherecydes is actually three things, written by Pherecydes as *Χρόνος* (*Chrónos*), *Ζάς* (*Zás*), and *Χάος* (*Cháos*). Here too the Stoics connected *Χάος* to *χέεσθαι* (*chéesthai*), and considered it to be watery.[91] In fact, Achilles Tatius the Astronomer, in his *Isagoga excerpta*, says both Thales and Pherecydes posit water as the ultimate principle.[92] The use of prose by Pherecydes should not be understated. In Bruno Snell's work, *The Discovery of the Greek Mind*, he makes a special case that the employment of a definite article in the Greek language helped enable philosophical speculation, because it was the ultimate impetus for abstraction: 'For how could scientific thought get along without such phrases as *τὸ ὕδωρ*,' later drawing a comparison between the Greek *τὸ ἀγαθόν* (*tò agathón*) with the Latin equivalent, *id quod* (*re vera*) *bonum est*.[93] Pherecydes is therefore extremely important, because he marks the transition to prose writing about the gods (including Chaos), helping, in a sense, to release the definite article for employment in more concrete accounts of (ultimate) reality.

Thales

We thus arrive at Thales. To suggest that Thales' new approach to the world emerged spontaneously and all at once, without any recourse to myth or religion, is to assume Thales' developed his philosophy in a cultural vacuum and essentially operated from a demythologized cognitive basis that preceded his establishment of that very basis. This explanation paints an inaccurate picture. As soon as we recognize that Thales had exposure to watery myths before he developed a worldview based in some way on *ὕδωρ*, we must admit that that exposure contributed to the development of his cosmology, even if he eventually found the myths in some way unsatisfactory. In fact, Popper claims that the clash of different cultures and their related myths was an essential component to the emergence of philosophy.[94]

> The critical attitude [of the Greek miracle] is partly, I suggest, the product of the *clash of different cultures.*
>
> Homer describes culture clash, though hardly consciously. Some of the early philosophers such as Thales and Pythagoras were, as tradition tells us, great travelers

[90] Trans. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 50.
[91] Ibid., 57.
[92] Achilles Tatius the Astronomer, *Isagoga excerpta* 3.28-30. But Sextus Empiricus tells us that Pherecydes posited earth as the ultimate principle. See Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes* 3.30 (ed. Mutschmann).
[93] Snell, *The Discovery of the Greek Mind*, 227-8.
[94] The idea of the confrontation of various cosmogonies promoting philosophy can be found in von Fritz, Der Beginn universalwissenchaftlicher Bestrebungen und der Primat der Griechen, 546-583; Popper, The Myth of the Framework, 23-48; Karl Popper, The World of Parmenides: Notes on Parmenides' poem and its origin in early Greek cosmology, in *The World of Parmenides: Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment,* edited by Arne F. Petersen and Jørgen Mejer (London: Routledge, 1998): 126-7. See also Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 17, who agrees that the confrontation of competing cosmogonies was influential but not enough, claiming that Thales' desire for recognition was the ultimate impetus. For my response to this particular idea of notoriety, see Chapter 12, in which Plato seeming paints the completely opposite picture of Thales.

> and students of Egyptian and oriental wisdom. The Ionian philosophers in Asia Minor were in contact with the civilizations of Phoenicia and Mesopotamia and some of the great men of Greece, especially Herodotus, were fully conscious of the significance of culture clash.[95]

But even Popper's observation does not preclude Thales' belief in gods, for the simple reason that any mythological accounts of aquatic deities operating as an underlying, generative element might have been unsuitable because they used competing proper names and were not general enough, and not because they were in essence false. Essentially, Thales' theory could still have been developed analogously from myth, just employing different language, and such a new use of language need not indicate the old way was erroneous (here I'll presumably diverge from Popper as well). Ultimately, it is important to recognize that Thales (or any other philosopher) can believe in gods and be influenced by mythology and religion but use a demythologized account to explain the ultimate principle, and this is a fact completely overlooked by O'Grady. 'Demythologized' should therefore be understood in the sense that the account was not conveyed through myth. But exactly how was Thales' conceptual scheme different from his predecessors? Before we can answer that, it is essential to thoroughly examine the content of the very watery myths that might have influenced him, and that is the focus of the next chapter.

[95] Popper, The World of Parmenides, 26-7.

Chapter 8
The Mythological Wellspring

'When asked, "What is the oldest of existing things," Thales answered "God, for he is unbegotten."'

-Iohannes Stobeus[1]

We have now reached a point wherein we should examine other possible mythological and religious influences on Thales. There have been many suggestions offered over the years, from Okeanos to Apsu, and some lesser known figures in between.[2] As we saw with Hippias, some go so far as to claim Thales' offered nothing substantially new at all.[3] One thing is certain, however: Thales must have been influenced by mytho-religious forces, since he was clearly not searching for a candidate to fill some empty idea of *ἀρχή* emerging *ex nhilo.*[4] It is therefore appropriate to take up the question of mythological and religious influence anew and review all the major pieces of evidence that have been offered for the various figures potentially influencing Thales. Accordingly, we begin with the arguments that Thales was influenced by myths concerning Okeanos, mostly because that is the most widely accepted view and, admittedly, the case is, at first glance, persuasive. Next, we will look at other, somewhat less secure mythological influences, with support particularly from the work of M.L. West. In the end, we will see that various different myths likely influenced Thales, and this helps us determine the problem question (as source of wonder) operative at the origin of philosophy.[5]

Okeanos

Why did Aristotle and later commentators speculate about the underlying influence (or lack thereof) of Okeanos? Arguably the most decisive evidence is found in two Homeric passages, *Il.* 14.200ff and *Il.*14.244ff, in which it appears that the gods and all things, respectively, come from Okeanos.

Homer, *Iliad* 14.200-1:

> *εἶμι γὰρ ὀψομένη πολυφόρβου πείρατα γαίης, Ὠκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν...*
>
> For I am faring to visit the limits of the all-nurturing earth, and Oceanus, from whom the gods are sprung...[6]

[1] Iohannes Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 1.1.29a (Th 339). Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[2] For a brief overview of various cosmographies, in which Acheloios is mentioned as predecessor of Okeanos in a discussion that also mentions Thales, see J. Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 4. Bremmer does not in any way discuss the actual relation of Acheloios to Thales, however.
[3] At least, if we believe Hippias was Aristotle's source for *Metaphysics,* 983b-984a. Cf. also Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio*, 2.50.
[4] Of course, the Neo-Marxians would claim the empty idea of an *ἀρχή* came from coins.
[5] Somewhat following von Fritz, Der Beginn universalwissenchaftlicher Bestrebungen und der Primat der Griechen, 546-583; and Popper, The Myth of the Framework, 23-48.
[6] Trans. Murray, *op. cit.*

Homer, *Iliad* 14.245-6:

> *...καὶ ἂν ποταμοῖο ῥέεθρα Ὠκεανοῦ, ὅς περ γένεσις πάντεσσι τέτυκται...*
>
> ...were it even the streams of the river Oceanus, from whom they all [alt. 'all things'] are sprung...[7]

Such passages alone are good reason to look no further for the mythological influence on Thales. If Homer believed that the gods and 'they all/all things' (*πάντεσσι / pántessi*) come from Okeanos, clearly Thales was influenced by Homer. Furthermore, in other Homeric accounts, Okeanos, a Titan, is a 'river that encircles the world beyond the sea,'[8] thus he appears on the outer rim of Achilles' shield: 'All around the outer shield he set the mighty stream of the river Okeanos'[9] (*Iliad*, 18.607f), indicating the idea that the earth rests on water was presaged by Homer. Some commentators have suggested a Vedic origin to Okeanos, drawing similarities to Vṛtra's epithet *āśáyāna*, meaning 'lying on,' which is phonetically similar, and like Okeanos both were depicted in a serpentine fashion: In early Greek art, which rarely depicts Okeanos, he appears as a serpent with the torso of a horned man (similar to early representations of Acheloios).[10] Ultimately, one could say that the Greeks had a very abstract conception of Okeanos—a liminal river extending from the sea, giving birth to the gods and all things, and from this conception Thales developed his cosmology based on the underlying substance, water.

And yet, the case has flaws. Part of the problem is the serious uncertainty about the contents of the epic in the Archaic Age, when Thales lived. We really do not know when it reached its final form, and there is a longstanding debate about which passages are later interpolations. Some scholars argue against an authoritative text before 150 BC.[11] Others, however, insist that it formed a complete text as early as the end of the 6th century BC (still after Thales).[12] So the idea that Thales would have been able to draw from a fairly consistent account of Okeanos in the early sixth century is rather unlikely, since the only concrete evidence of Okeanos dating to Thales' life is the Attic vase—thus nothing in Miletos or any of the areas where Thales' traveled.

Another problem concerns the composition of Book 14, specifically. Apparently, there is little scholarly consensus concerning its formulation and internal consistency. On the one hand, Dihle argued, contra Reinhardt,[13] that virtually all of Book 14 emerged from a later, written tradition.[14] Other important critics, like Richard Janko, consider Book 14 a 'masterpiece' that

[7] Trans. Murray, *op. cit.* Janko (following Burkert) considers both the Derveni theogony and this passage from Homer as indicative of an influence from an earlier tradition, comparing Okeanos and Apsu, but unaware of the relation of Acheloios to Apsu, discussed below (R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary. Volume IV: Books 13-16*, edited by G.S. Kirk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 181-2). Janko even cites *Il.* 21.195ff, seemingly unaware of (or not recognizing as important) the earlier versions of the book missing line 195, though D'Alessio's work had yet to appear. He considers Book 14 a 'masterpiece' that demonstrates Homer's brilliance (See ibid., 149ff).
[8] Beaulieu, *The Sea in Greek Imagination*, 1.
[9] *ἐν δ' ἐτίθει ποταμοῖο μέγα σθένος Ὠκεανοῖο ἄντυγα πὰρ πυμάτην σάκεος πύκα ποιητοῖο.* Trans. Butler, *op.cit.*
[10] Cf. Sophilos' Wedding of Peleus and Thetis, Attica, c. 590 BC, British Museum 1971,1101.1; and Isler, Acheloos, no.245.
[11] Gilbert Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).
[12] Gregory Nagy, Homeric Poetry and Problems of Multiformity: The 'Panathenaic Bottleneck, *Classical Philology* 96 (2001): 109–119.
[13] K. Reinhardt, *Die Ilias und ihr Dichter* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 289ff.
[14] Albrecht Dihle, *Homer-Probleme* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1970), 83-92.

demonstrates Homer's brilliance.[15] This lack of scholarly consensus means we must at least consider the possibility that Okeanos as source of all water (and all gods) could very well be a later interpolation into the Homeric tradition, since the evidence concerning *Il.* 21, 194ff, is so convincing (in which the line about Okeanos is athetized), and Book 14 has been described for years as, 'a collection of patches, unskillfully joined by short passages of transition.'[16] For that matter, the Book 14 passages do not equate Okeanos with water, and all the other passages from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* indicate that Okeanos was not water itself but instead a river around the edge of the earth.[17] Hence, this more nuanced conception of Okeanos likely influenced Megakleides' omission of line 195 from his version of the *Iliad*: 'which stream is greater than Acheloios, "from whom all rivers <flow>"?...so that he omitted the line about Ocean..'[18] Panchenko adds further doubt in his analysis of the two Book 14 passages, in which, according to him, 'all gods' (in 201) actually means 'all stream-gods,' and 'all things'/ 'they all' (in 246) also refers to river gods, insofar as '*πάντεσσι points to ῥέεθρα* [*rhéethra* / streams].'[19] This interpretation adds further weight to the case that Okeanos was added later, seemingly in direct competition with Acheloios.

For their part, KRS refer to *Il.* 14.200 as a 'poetical extension' and *Il.*14.244 as probably referring only to living things.[20] Indeed, the author of the *Derveni* goes so far as to claim Okeanos has nothing to do with water, and this as late as the 5th century (indicating that the *nouveau* 5th-century view that Okeanos was the source of all water was wrong and not keeping with tradition).[21] In fact, the idea that Okeanos was a later import into Miletos finds support in West's work, in which he argues for a strong Iranian influence on Greek philosophy in the mid 6th century into the 5th century (thus again mostly after Thales). Here he points out, as others have, that Pherecydes' use of *Ὠγηνός* (Ōgēnós) might stem from Aramaic *'ôgānâ*, meaning 'basin,' or *'ôgen*, meaning 'rim.'[22]

It is notable, too, that Herodotus criticizes this view of Okeanos as a river that runs around the world, which he claims was a belief held by the Greeks.[23] Scholars believe he was criticizing later Milesians, namely, Anaximander and Hecataetus, who were known for making such maps,[24] but not Thales.[25] In fact, it has been suggested that Thales would have benefited greatly from

[15] Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary*. Volume IV: Books 13-16, 149ff.
[16] Andrew Lang, *Homer and the Epic* (Longmans, Green, and Company, 1893), 166ff.
[17] For passages concerning Okeanos, see Homer, *Il.* 1.420ff; 3.5; 5.5; 7.420ff; 8.485; 16.150ff; 18.240; 18.399ff, 18.485ff; 18.605ff; 19.1; 20.5ff; 23.205ff. In these examples Okeanos is a river, also the area in which the sun rises and sets, the boundary between Hades and the world of the living, and, in two rare cases, bordering Ethiopia, essentially the edge of the world. This is generally consistent with Homer, *Od.* 4.565ff (Okeanos is the cause of blasts of wind, contra Thales' notion (Th. 13) that Estian winds cause flooding of the Nile); 5.275; 10.139; 10.505ff; 11.10ff; 11.155ff; 11.639; 12.1; 19.434; 20.65f; 22.195f; 23.240ff; 23.345ff; 24.10ff. All in all, with the exception of Book 14 and the later version of Book 21, Okeanos is never seen as the source of all water.
[18] F 4a in R. Janko, *Philodemus. On Poems. Book One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 141.
[19] Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 19; D. Panchenko, ΓΕΝΕΣΙΣ ΠΑΝΤΕΣΣΙ: The Iliad 14.201 and 14.246 Reconsidered, *Hyperboreus* 1 (1994) 1, 183-186.
[20] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 14.
[21] *P. Derveni* XXIII. For dating, see D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 33, note 59.
[22] West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, 50. Perhaps Pherecydes rivaled Thales in the Acheloios/Okeanos debate as well?
[23] Herodotus, *Histories* 4.36 (see also 2.21; 2.23; 4.8).
[24] For an authoritative overview, see Germaine Aujac, The Foundations of Theoretical Cartography in Archaic and Classical Greece, in *The History of Cartography.* Volume I: *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, edited by J. B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): 130-147.
[25] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The PreSocratic Philosophers*, 104-5. Cf. Eustathius of Thessalonica, *Commentarium in Dionysii*

such a tool in his political activities.[26] This idea that Okeanos was an ultimate river surrounding the earth, and more importantly that he was the source of all water, therefore seems to post-dates Thales' Ionia and reflects the influence of the traditions of Greece proper (i.e. Hesiodic) or elsewhere (Iran) on Miletos in the mid to late 6th century. And, let us not forget, that the longer version of *Il.* 21, which included Okeanos, probably dates to after the late 6th century, so after Thales and during the life of Hecataetus.[27]

Ultimately, there is a lot of uncertainty regarding the status of Okeanos in Greece proper, and therefore the situation in Ionia is even more uncertain. There is no strong evidence that Okeanos was seen as the source of all water in the mid 6th century BC or earlier in Ionia, and he is never equated with water. On the contrary, there is plenty of evidence that Acheloios was viewed in precisely this way, based on the extant archaeological evidence that ties Acheloios to Miletos, and as we saw in the etymology of *ὕδωρ*, Thales chose a word that denotes fresh water, not salty water, the latter of which one naturally associates with Okeanos ('Ocean' being an abstract extension of the sea).[28] We also have the authority of two famous ethnic Ionians of the 4th century, Megakleides and Zenodotus,[29] both of whom advocated Acheloios was the source of all water, not Okeanos, and that must be taken into consideration when examining the potential influence of Okeanos (or lack thereof) on Thales. Of course, by the end of the 6th century, the competition between Okeanos and Acheloios had likely surfaced, and there might have been a conflation that early as well. It would therefore be imprudent to dismiss entirely the influence of Okeanos (as O'Grady does).[30] Indeed, perhaps the competition between Okeanos and Acheloios influenced Thales, which we will discuss in the Conclusion to this book.

Apsu and Asallúhi

Aside from Okeanos, there are other mythological figures from the general Mediterranean region and beyond that might have influenced Thales. Indeed, for many years scholars have made a connection between the Mesopotamian subterranean waters, Apsu, and Thales' watery *ἀρχή*.[31] As Aristotle recounts, 'Others say that it [the earth] rests upon water. This, indeed, is the earliest account we have received, and they say that Thales of Miletus stated it: that [the earth] is at rest because it floats like wood or something else of that sort...'[32] The Mesopotamian tradition which might have given rise to this belief appears in the *Enuma Elish*. In that story, Apsu is the subterranean waters which, when mingled with Tiamat (the sea), creates the world.

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periegetae orbis descriptionem, epistola 208.9-17 (ed. Müller=Th 544).

[26] Marcel Conche, Anaximandre. Fragments et témoignages. Texte grec, traduction, introduction et commentaire, *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, Vol. 92, No. 1 (1994): 43–47

[27] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 33, note 59.

[28] Beaulieu, *The Sea in Greek Imagination,* 4, 11, 15, 30, 61-62, 188-90, 194-5, 197, 206.

[29] In Greece proper, Hesiod's abode, the idea of Okeanos as the god of all water might date as early as the 8th to 7th century. But the eastern Greek colonies were probably more under the influence of Near Eastern traditions, wherein Acheloios would have assumed that position. This is why critics like Megakleides and Zenodotus were aware of an earlier tradition and made appropriate corrections (cf. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography*, Vol. II, 2-12).

[30] Cf. Seleukos, *P.Oxy* 0221, IX, 8-11, discussed above. Wilamowitz attributes the lines to Panyassis of Halicarnassus, *Fr. 13*, and argues Acheloios was the original. See U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Review of G.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri 2* (London, 1899), *GGA* 162 (1900): 42; Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*, 1.91ff. All of this evidence is presented in D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams. See also Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 60, note 187. For O'Grady's outright dismissal of the influence of Okeanos, see O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 71-82.

[31] West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient,* 213.

[32] Aristotle, *de Caelo* 2.13.294a12ff, Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*

Enuma Elish 1-9:

> When the heavens above did not exist,
> And earth beneath had not come into being —
> There was Apsû, the first in order, their begetter,
> And demiurge Tia-mat, who gave birth to them all;
> They had mingled their waters together
> Before meadow-land had coalesced and reed-bed was to be found —
> When not one of the gods had been formed
> Or had come into being, when no destinies had been decreed,
> The gods were created within them.[33]

Here we have the apparent primacy of Apsu, as begetter of all, and it is also fairly clear that the Okeanos-Tethys story derives to some extent from this eastern predecessor.[34] Some have argued that Apsu and Tiamat are the male and female aspects of the primordial water, suggesting that Apsu represents fresh water while Tiamat salt water. [35] (There is also a similarity with the Sanskrit *Apsu/* अप्सु, literally 'in water,' which is derived from the Mesopotamian notion of subterranean water, and has virtually the same name).[36] Whatever the exact details, it is clear that this early story positions a primordial water as the origin ('first in order') and thus it is certainly plausible that Thales borrowed the concept of (divine) water as origin from the Near East, as indicated in the passages from Aristotle in which the earth rests on water, and that water is the *ἀρχή* of all things.

When we look at Asallúhi the case gets more interesting. The aforementioned mercenaries that transferred the mythology and cultic practices of the man-faced bull tradition into the greater Greek world were likely exposed to the Near Eastern deity, Asallúhi, who emerges in the 3rd millennium BC but continues to appear in literature until Seleukid times.[37] He is arguably the most important mythological figure in the orient-occident scenario concerning Acheloios.[38] The connection between Asallúhi and Acheloios was first discovered by Dr. Nicola Sisci and subsequently published in our work together,[39] but an overview is essential in the present discussion (and some new discoveries have been made). Asallúhi (also Asarlúhi or Asarilúhi)[40] was the son of Akkadian Enki,[41] the god of the subterranean waters (aforementioned Apsu), who emerges on the earth as rivers and streams (sometimes he was viewed as the son of Apsu).[42]

[33] Trans. Lambert, *op.cit*.
[34] Pritchard, *ANET*, 60f. See also Bernabé, The Primordial Water: Between Myth and Philosophy, 420.
[35] Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 12.
[36] Cf. e.g., *Rig Veda* 10.45.3.
[37] The most up-to-date analysis of the texts concerning Asallúhi can be found in Markham J. Geller, *Healing Magic and Evil Demons: Canonical Udug-hul Incantations* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016).
[38] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 14f, but many different deities took on the form of a man-faced bull or bull man in the Near East—though potentially all derived from one source, as Wiggerman suggests. See ibid., 15, for discussion.
[39] Ibid., 14-5.
[40] Asarlúhi or Asarilúhi are the earlier forms dating to the third millennium, whereas Asallúhi appears c. 18th century. Oshima, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, 191.
[41] For an overview of Enki, see Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia. An Illustrated Dictionary* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 75.
[42] For various aspects of Asallúhi see T. Oshima, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 191; Whittaker, Milking the Udder of Heaven: A Note on Mesopotamian and Indo-Iranian Religious Imagery, in *From Daēnā to Dîn. Religion, Kulture und Sprache in der iranischen Welt: Festschrift für Philip Kreyenbroek zum 60. Geburstag*, edited by Christine Allison, Anke Joisten-Pruschke, and Antje Wendtland (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 127-37

Asallúhi carried many epithets that indicate he was the source of much of the Acheloios tradition. For instance, in a Sumerian temple hymn he is referred to as follows:

> Your prince, the most precious prince Asarlúhi, the most precious one, is a warrior, born a noble prince, a leopard who seizes prey. He is like an onrushing storm battering the rebel land. As long as it remains disobedient, he pours spittle upon it. Asar-alim-nuna, the son of the abzu, has erected a house in your precinct, O house Kuara, and taken his seat upon your dais. (ETCSL, 140-5)[43]

The 'prince' epithet (elsewhere he is the 'princely bison'),[44] is similar to the Homeric treatment of Acheloios, where Homer allegedly referred to Acheloios with the princely epithet.[45] Asallúhi's association with warriors is another indication that mercenaries would have revered him, further linking him to Acheloios.[46] Importantly, in one text Asallúhi is even referred to as having both bovine and fluvial aspects: 'Son endowed with broad understanding, whose movement is that of an animal with large horns in the reed beds; Asarlúhi, mighty deluge determining great fates, unleashed and knowing no course whatsoever!'[47] Thus, like Acheloios, Asallúhi is described as a bovine river deity of sorts. More, Asallúhi is also identified with water itself: 'take the bucket, the hoisting device with the wooden bail, bring water from the mouth of the twin rivers, over that water cast your holy spell, purify it with your holy incantation, and sprinkle that water over the man, the son of his god.'[48] In my reading, 'that water' and 'the son' both refer to Asallúhi, the son of either Enki or Apsu.[49] This is an interesting connection, because Acheloios was paramount to lustratio rituals and likewise identified with water.[50]

There is also evidence that, like Acheloios, Asallúhi operated as a civic emblem for cities: 'Kuara, the beloved city which you have chosen in your heart, lives in joy because of you.'[51] Other associations with Kuara reinforce this idea.[52] Asallúhi's role as a 'supervisor of the purification priests of *e*-abzu [Apsu]' is equally significant: On the one hand, it associates him with ritual cleansing which is a primary component of the Acheloios tradition in the Greek world,[53] and there are important cylinder seals that reflect further on this practice as it involved Asallúhi (e.g., Figure 26).[54] The identification of Asallúhi on this seal, depicted as two man-faced bulls on either side of a female undergoing some (presumably) pre-nuptual lustratio ritual rests on the

(etymology and religious traditions), particularly 130f. Originally, Asalluhi was seen as the son of Apsu, and apparently only later became the son of Enki. See M. Geller, *Forerunners to Udug-hul. Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985), 13.

[43] Text and translation from The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, University of Oxford (available at http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk)

[44] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 14f.

[45] Pausanias, *Descriptions of Greece* 8.38.10; Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 14, note 207.

[46] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 2.

[47] D. Charpin, *Le Clergé d'Ur au siècle d'Hammurapi* (Genève: Droz, 1986), 357-366, line 20ff.

[48] Frans A.M. Wiggerman, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (Groningen: STYX & PP, 1992), 66.

[49] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 14. It wouldn't make sense for the sick man to be considered a child of a god, whereas it makes perfect sense in terms of Asallúhi and Apsu.

[50] Ibid., 60-64.

[51] Charpin, *Le Clergé d'Ur au siècle d'Hammurapi*, 357-366, line 20ff.

[52] Cf. ETCSL, 146: e_2 ^{d}*asar-lu*$_2$*-hi kuara*^{ki} / 'the house of Asarluhi in Kuara.'

[53] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 61ff.

[54] Urs Winter, *Frau und Göttin: Exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im Alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt* (Tübingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), no. 74.

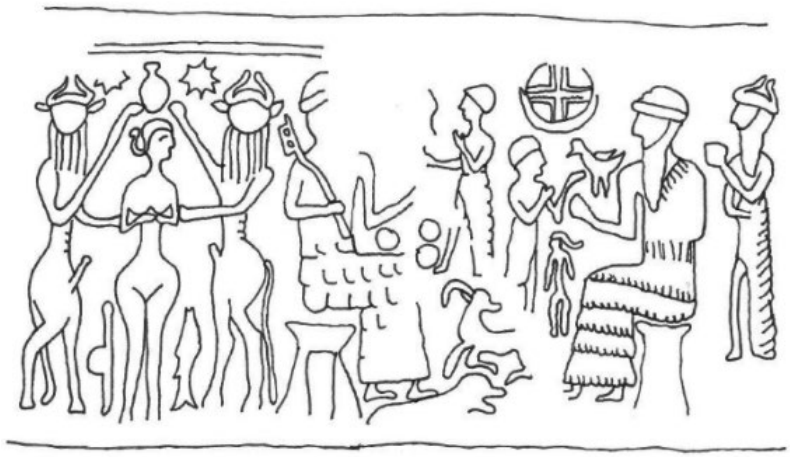

Figure 26: Two manifestations of Asallúhi on either side of a woman whom they are about to cleanse, from a cylinder seal. Author's drawing based on Winter's original.

association of Asallúhi with marriage and childbearing (much like Acheloios).[55] On the other hand, his role as a supervisor of priests connects him with the Cypriot traditions in which priests wore man-faced bull masks[56] in cultic practices that transferred into the Greek world, since in both the Cypriot traditions and those of Acheloios the use of masks[57] to assimilate with the god has been demonstrated, and this same feature is known to have occurred amongst the followers of Asallúhi—hence, his followers would shout, 'I am Asallúhi!' [58] Indeed, in much later Cypriot prayers we find the Greek *ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς κατὰ τοῦ Αχελομορφωθ* (*Achelomorphōth*) ..., 'I adjure thee, assuming the form of Acheloios....,' a late carryover from this same tradition.[59]

On another important cylinder seal from Syria, probably dating to the early 2nd millennium BC, we find an enthroned Enki holding a container collecting water from the heads of two man-faced bulls, which surely represent manifestations of Asallúhi, given the corresponding mythological tradition.[60] Also, Marduk, the Near Eastern deity with links to Zeus and Herakles, is mentioned just before Asallúhi in the Weidener God list,[61] and this makes perfect sense,

[55] For the role of Asallúhi in conception, pregnancy, and birth, see Claudia D. Bergmann, *Childbirth as a Metaphor for Crisis: Evidence from the Ancient Near East* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 43.
[56] Ciasca, Le Protomi e le Maschere, 356. For discussion of Cyprus in relation to the transference of man-faced bull iconography and the formulation of the cult of Acheloios, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 17-22, 32-9, 50-7, 67-70, etc.
[57] In fact, the most common depiction of Acheloios in the Etruscan world was as a mask. See Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 52.
[58] See W.H. Halo, More Incantations and Rituals from the Yale Babylonian Collection, in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Integrative Perspectives*, Volume I, edited by I.T. Abusch and K. Van Der Toorn (Groningren: Styx, 1999), 295.
[59] I. Kourion 131, 134, 138, 142. See also Molinari, Αχελομορφωθ: Magistrates of Akarnania. A Reconsideration of the Iconographic Fluctuations on Akarnanian Federal Coinage, *passim.*
[60] William H. Ward, *The seal cylinders of western Asia* (Washington: Carnegie, 1910), 321, f.1024; Félix Lajard, *Introduction a l'étude du culte public et des mystères de Mithra en Orient et en Occident.* Volume 2 (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1847), PL. XXXII, 7.
[61] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 23-9, covers the relation of Marduk to Herakles and Zeus. For the list, see Egbert Von Weiher, SpTU 3, 108, in *CDLI* P348712 (1988), transliterating a Hellenistic period cuneiform

since the 3rd century Babylonian writer Berossos[62] claimed that images of *ταύρους ἀνθρώπων κεφαλὰς ἔχοντας* (bulls with human faces) 'were set up (*ἀνακεῖσθαι*) in the temple of *Βῆλος* (i.e. Marduk).'[63] Finally, Asallúhi appears as one of the fifty names of Marduk in the *Enuma Elish,* which is indicative of the notion of assimilation we encounter so frequently in the Acheloian tradition.[64] Ultimately, Asallúhi is the earthly manifestation of Apsu, insofar as he is a manifestation of the subterranean waters on earth, and there are various parallels to the Acheloios tradition insofar as the rivers of the world are the sinews of Acheloios. Add to this evidence the common phenomenon of the s-k linguistic changeover in which the velar stop is substituted for the palatal sibilant in words coming from the Near East into the Greek,[65] and the connection appears quite sound.

As a result of all this evidence, we can perhaps add further insight into Thales' explanation of earthquakes. Thales allegedly believed that the earth rests on water and that, 'in every major earthquake new springs usually burst forth.' [66] This finds interesting parallels in the traditions of both Apsu and Asallúhi because Apsu, as the subterranean waters, emerges on the earth as Asallúhi and specifically in the form of rivers and streams.[67] This characteristic, of course, only reinforces the potential role of Acheloios, because, just as Apsu emerges on the earth in the form of his son, Asallúhi, so, too, Acheloios operates in the Greek context as the ultimate source of water that appears in rivers and streams (hence the local embodiments of Acheloios).[68] Thus it very well may be the Asallúhi-Acheloios connection that solidifies the link between Apsu and Thales, a connection previously unknown.[69] The only thing working against the Near Eastern direct influence is the fact that Apsu was not isolated as all water, but instead sweet water that seemingly co-exists with Tiamat (salt water). Jacobsen, in his book, summarizes thusly:

> This description presents the earliest stage of the universe as one of watery chaos. The chaos consisted of three intermingled elements: Apsu, who represents the sweet waters; Ti'amat, who represents the sea; and Mummu, who cannot as yet be identified with certainty but may represent cloud-banks and mist. These three types of water were mingled in a large undefined mass. There was not yet even the idea of a sky above or firm ground beneath; all was water; not even a swampy bog had been formed, still less an island; and there were yet no gods.

Jacobsen's description of a chaotic watery origin is certainly more akin to Pherecydes and Hesiod, at least if we follow the Stoic interpretation of their works.[70] In any case, if we find persuasive the argument that Thales was influenced by Apsu, it supports the idea that he was

tablet from Uruk.
[62] *FGrHist* 680 F 1, Fr. 12 (ed. Schnabel).
[63] For discussion in relation to Tiamat and the *Enūma Eliš*, from which the Greek tale stems, see D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 26.
[64] *Enūma Eliš* Tablet 6, 101 and 147.
[65] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 93.
[66] *quod in omni maiore moute erumpunt fere moui fonts*. Seneca, *Natural Questions* 6.6.1-2 (Th 101).
[67] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 14.
[68] Ibid., 91-96.
[69] See West, *Early Greek philosophy and the Orient*, 213, for Apsu and Tiamat in relation to Thales. West sees an influence but distinguishes Thales because his system is demythologized.
[70] Cf. e.g., Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 57.

influenced by Acheloios, which is likely how the stories were adopted and transformed in Milesian religion.

Yahweh

Yahweh has an aquatic dimension that is often overlooked, and this fact makes him relevant to a discussion of the religious influences on Thales, especially because we know the Ionians were at least as far as Northern Syria during his life. In cult, the importance of water to Jewish religion is indicated first by the many ancient cultic sites throughout the Levant that have distinct aquatic features; in many cases a spring or fountain served as the focal point of religious practices. As Smith explained in his lectures, at virtually all sites inhabited by the Semites, and particularly in the north, 'a certain sanctity could hardly fail to be ascribed to every source of living water.'[71] Smith mentions, in particular, the source of the Jordan River and the sacredness of those waters to the Israelites.[72] In this case the source was at the ancient city of Dan, [73] where we will find Yahweh represented as a man-faced bull (discussed below). At the sanctuary of Kadesh (or Meribah), where the Torah itself originated, Moses taught by the 'fountain of judgment.'[74] At Beersheba, there were seven holy wells, seven being a sacred number for the Hebrews, and thus Abraham and Abimelech have seven lambs as part of the oath sworn there.[75] Also at that site the digging of a well had particular prominence.[76] Likewise, at Mamre, a holy well was an essential feature for the religious community.[77] There it was connected directly to Abraham, and in ancient ritual it would be illuminated with lamps, accentuating the 'living waters' that were contained therein.[78] These living waters thus had a distinct place in Jewish cultic practice—in one case a woman accused of adultery actually had to drink holy water. If she was indeed guilty, 'May this water that brings a curse enter your body so that your abdomen swells or your womb miscarries.'[79]

The *mikveh* is an excellent example of the importance of water to Jewish cultic practices that survives to this day. A *mikveh* is essentially a meticulously crafted tub or hole filled with naturally collected spring water (living waters), or in some cases a river or spring itself, in which patrons are completely submerged (*tvilah*) in an ablution ritual.[80] The *mikveh* is so important to the Jews, at least historically, that for some important authorities it took precedent over the building of the synagogue[81] or purchasing of a Torah scroll.[82] *Mikvehs* are generally used for full-body emersion, though they are also employed to submerge utensils purchased from gentiles. For full-body submersion, the reasons are many—for instance, a woman will cleanse herself to conclude her menstrual cycle, and men will likewise perform a similar bath after the discharge of semen. *Tvilah* is also undergone before Yom Kippur (the day of atonement) and

[71] W. Smith, *Religion of the Semites* (London: Transaction, 2005), 169.
[72] Ibid., 171
[73] Ibid.
[74] J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von G. Reimer, 1883), viii. 3. Cf. Gen. 14:7.
[75] Smith, *Religion of the Semites,* 182.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 173.
[78] Ibid., 177.
[79] Ibid. Num. 5:11-22
[80] S. Lesches, *Understanding Mikvah: An overview of Mikvah construction* (Montreal, 2001).
[81] *Igros Moshe Chosen Mishpat* 1:40; *Minchas Yitzchak* 5:83.
[82] *Ein Yitzchak Orach Chayim siman* 3; *Igros Kodesh* 10:316; *Taharas Mayim* p. 23.

for all converts to Judaism. Similarly, before burial, Orthodox communities will submerge the dead as a final purification, and it is even required before ascending the Temple Mount.

These geological and cultic contexts of Judaism form an important basis for the ancient scriptural accounts of Yahweh, in which He has a clear aquatic dimension. For instance, at the very outset of Genesis we are told:

> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God *swept over the face of the waters*. (Gen. 1:1-2)

This passage is interesting because it exhibits Yahweh interacting with water before He gives form to the world with His voice, indicating a unique cosmographical positioning of water outside the subsequently articulated physical world, a theme that runs throughout the Old and New Testaments. In this passage, water is therefore distinct from all other corporeal entities, and the rest of the Bible consistently reinforces this special status. For instance, and I mention just the most obvious Old Testament cases for illustration: Yahweh creates Adam from *aphar* (עָפָר)[83] of the ground that was watered by subterranean springs (Gen. 2:6-7); Paradise (Eden) is watered by a river which divides into four major rivers (Gen. 2: 10-14); Yahweh's wrath and mercy are orchestrated using water in the story of Noah's Ark (Gen. 6-9); Moses' life is spared as he drifts off in a basket down the Nile in Exod. 2:1-10, and, conversely, the end of his life is signaled with the story of the drawing of water from a rock in the desert in Exod. 17; the water of the Nile transforms to blood in Exod. 7:14-24, and, moreover, there is a transformation of bitter water to sweet water in Exod. 15: 22-27; finally, Yahweh's parting of the sea and its swallowing up of the Egyptians in Exod. 14 is another indication of water's role to both sustain and destroy life according to His Will. All of these passages reveal an aquatic component to early Jewish religion in which Yahweh at the very least frequently interacts with his people using water—it is clearly instrumental in bringing about reward and punishment, and insofar as *aphar* needs water to bind it, the very form of the human person as well.

But this idea of an aquatic dimension to Yahweh's activities goes far beyond a mere instrument of Yahweh's will—it is brought to a new level with the characterization of Yahweh surrounding the tabernacle as having a distinctively moist visage, appearing in a cloud. For example, in Exod. 13: 21, we learn, 'And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way.' There are many similar passages.[84] In Lev. 16:2, Yahweh says directly, 'For I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.' The Hebrew here is עָנָן (*ʿā·nān*). Indeed, the very sign for Yahweh's covenant, a rainbow, is exhibited in a cloud in Gen. 9:13. Thus, when we learn in Num. 4:6 that the Ark of the Covenant was covered with a blue תְּכֶלֶת (*tə·ḵê·leṯ*) veil, this indicates an overt visual association of the Ark with water.[85] We find the appearance of

[83] Usually translated as 'dust' it is clear from the context that it is mixed with water, hence water occupies a fundamental position in the constitution of man, to which is added the breath of life. Cf. also its use in Leviticus 14:41,42,45, where it is plaster.

[84] Exod. 14:20; 19.9; 24:18; 34:5; 40:34-38; Deut. 1:33; 4:11(dense, black cloud, perhaps smoke); Num. 10:34; 14:14; 1 Kings 8:10-1; 2 Chr. 5:13-14; Ps. 97:2; Isa. 4:5 (but here cloud of smoke, specifically). Cf. also Daniel 7: 13-14; Luke 21: 25-28, 34-36; Rev. 1:7.

[85] Hence Gen. 1:6: 'And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."'

the cloud in relation to Yahweh's presence illustrated nicely at the end of Exodus (40:34-38), where we learn:

> Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would go onward; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not go onward till the day it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in sight of all the house of Israel.

Clearly, Yahweh manifests himself to some degree using a cloud in the ancient scriptures. Indeed, in Ps. 29:3, He sits enthroned over engulfing waters, and in Jer. 2:13, He is actually referred to as the 'fountain of living water.' Altogether, these various scriptural references—Yahweh interacting with water before giving form to creation; Yahweh interacting with his people through water; Yahweh appearing in a cloud; and Yahweh described as 'living water'—indicate water is utterly essential in understanding how He appears to His people and orchestrates His will.[86]

Given this watery background, one could make a reasonable case that the Hebrew word for covenant, specifically as it pertains to the Ark of the Covenant described in Exodus, [87] developed out of two earlier, sometimes interchangeable Akkadian words, one of which can mean, generally speaking, either water or oath. The word for covenant in the context of the Ark is the Hebrew word צדות (*eduth*): 'and you shall put into the ark the *testimony* I shall give you' (Exod. 25:16);[88] or 'from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the *covenant*' (Exod. 25:22).[89] The Hebrew comes from the middle-weak root *uwd* (עוד, pronounced 'ood'), meaning 'to return, go about, repeat, do again,' but also, 'testify (as by reiteration).'[90] This Hebrew root, in turn, may come from the Akkadian *adû*, meaning 'seal, oath' or sometimes more specifically 'treaty oath, vassal treaty.'[91] Interestingly, as mentioned in Chapter 5, *adû* has a synonym in Akkadian documents, *edû*,[92] which means 'high water' or perhaps 'divine water,' hence the potential root-system of the Hebrew word for covenant might be in a term that means either oaths or water depending on the context. Although *ed*û has a cognate with Hebrew *ade* (water vapor),[93] *ade* itself emerges from אוד (*ud,* also pronounced 'ood'),[94] meaning a 'brand, firebrand,' and hence, a seal or mark. Thus, the Hebrew *eduth* is seemingly rooted in a term that means either 'oath' or 'water,' *adû*, since the original Akkadian words *edû* and *adû* overlapped, and, given the watery context of the early Hebrew literature and cultic practices,

[86] Cicero's description of Thales' *ὕδωρ* is incredibly similar. He claims Thales posited an intelligence that gave shape to the water. Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.25-6 (ed. Pease).
[87] Not the earlier covenant, in which case it was בְּרִיתִי (bə·rî·ṯî).
[88] Trans. using New American Standard Bible.
[89] Trans. using New American Standard Bible (replacing 'testament' with 'covenant' in Exod. 25:22).
[90] Strong 5749.
[91] von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, 14; Ignace Gelb, Benno Landsberger, A. Leo Oppenheim, and Erica Reiner, eds., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Volume I: A, Part 1 (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute, 1964), 131.
[92] von Soden, Lexikalisches Archiv.: Die akkadische Synonymenliste 'D,' 233-250; von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, 187,
[93] Strong 108.
[94] Strong 181.

there are good reasons to assign a watery origin to the Hebrew word for covenant. Indeed, the relation of water and oaths would not be exclusive to the Akkadians or Jews—in the Greek tradition, *ὕδωρ* (stemming from Akkadian *edû*) [95] is a sacred element upon which the oath of the gods is sworn (cf. Aristotle, *Meta.*, 983b29ff and Ephorus *FgrH* 27). And, with Sanskrit, the related *udan* (उदन्),[96] when appearing as a compound in *samudra* (समुद्र),[97] also means 'seal' when employing a specific qualifier—*samudralekha* (समुद्रलेख),[98] hence indicative of the consecrating property of water.

These etymological links are indicative of a greater association of water and sacredness, which encourages a renewed look at water in the Old Testament. This brings us to the most interesting observation: there is persuasive evidence that Yahweh was worshipped in the form of a man-faced bull,[99] an iconography intimately linked with water and, of course, the cornucopia.[100] Leroy Waterman, following several other scholars who pointed out that Yahweh was worshipped openly as a (regular) bull,[101] makes the most comprehensive case for a distinct androcephalic feature based on an analysis of Exod. 32:4 (Aaron's golden calf),[102] I Kings 12: 26-32 (Jeroboam I erects golden calves in North Israel), and other important texts.[103] In Waterman's reading, which is supported by an analysis of the written tradition,[104] the original (early Judaean)[105] commandment was not against graven images of Yahweh such as a carved bull or man-faced bull (for Yahweh calls *for* graven images shortly after the commandments are issued),[106] but rather molten images of Yahweh or any other deity, wherein the idol itself becomes an object of worship (so cf. Exodus 34: 17: 'You shall make for yourself no molten images').[107] He argues, convincingly, that embellishments of the Exodus story about the golden calf (specifically the notion of graven images) were later interpolations incorporating the Ephraimite, Late Prophetic, and Late Priestly Narratives, the I Kings calf story being written earlier, since the plural, 'gods,' does not make sense in the Exodus context.[108] Waterman surmises, 'It is to be noted that in both the golden-calf narratives, the circumstances naturally presuppose the well-established use of the bull image of Yahweh.'[109] In other words, Waterman's claim is that the iconography of the bull would not have been a shock to the people when presented, and we know that in both cases, the people were not in violation of the First Commandment (cf.

[95] Giovanni Semerano, *L'Origini Della Cultura Europea. Volume II: Dizionari Etimologici* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1994), 208f.
[96] Apte, *The Student's Sanskrit-English Dictionary*,104.
[97] Ibid., 585.
[98] Ibid., 589.
[99] For the argument, see L. Waterman, Bull-worship in Israel, *AJSL* 31 (1915): 229-55.
[100] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* Chapters 1 & 2.
[101] Cf. C.J. Ellicott, *A Bible Commentary for English Readers by Various Writers* (London: Cassell and Company, 1897), 309; H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 327ff; O. Eissfeldt, 'Lade and Stierbild,' *ZAW* 58 (1940-41), 201; O. Keel-Leu, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament* (Frieburg: Universitätsverlag Frieburg, 1974), 126; M.L. Süring, *The Horn-Motif in the Hebrew Bible and Related Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Iconography* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980), 300-438.
[102] Usually translated as 'calf,' the Hebrew word עֵגֶל can be translated as 'bull,' with the obvious correlation to Ezekiel's ox-footed cherubim (Ezek. 1:7). See Ellicott, *A Bible Commentary for English Readers,* 309.
[103] Waterman, Bull-worship in Israel, *passim*.
[104] Cf. C.F. Kent, *The Student's Old Testament: Narratives of the Beginnings of Hebrew History from the Creation to the Establishment of the Hebrew Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), i-ii, xiii-xxxiv, 185-6, 189ff.
[105] As opposed to Ephraimite, Late Prophetic, and Late Priestly.
[106] Exodus 25: 18ff.
[107] Waterman, Bull-worship in Israel, 240-246. Cf. Acts 19: 21-41.
[108] The language and employment of 'Gods' is nearly identical, and since in Exodus there was only one 'calf,' it appears that this addition was later, after the iconography itself had been demonized, as opposed to simply the molten image.
[109] Waterman, Bull-worship in Israel, 236.

Exod. 20:3, Deut. 5:7) in the sense that they were worshipping a deity other than Yahweh, but instead guilty of idolatry, stemming from (for Waterman, at least) the application of precious metal (forming an ephod)[110] to the graven image. In other words, the 'sin' in the earliest versions of the stories involved worshipping the Yahweh idol itself (apparently induced by the application of precious metal), as opposed to the more general operation of an iconic device used to promote worship of Yahweh (like a dove for the Holy Spirit).

Scholars therefore largely agree that Yahweh was rather widely and very openly represented in some bovine form, in Jerusalem itself, and also particularly in the North, at Ophrah (Jud. 6:25ff),[111] Mt. Ephraim (Jud. 17:5),[112] Dan (Jud. 18:18),[113] Nob (I Sam. 21:9)[114] and Bethel (Hos. 10:5; I Kings 12:32).[115] This makes perfect sense. We know from archaeological excavations that the earliest Jewish altars (and many Canaanite altars) all had bull horns,[116] and that the slaughtering of bulls was an essential component to Jewish cult (cf. Exodus 24: 4-7; Leviticus 1-4, 16:18, etc.). Indeed, the name *El*' (the ultimate root of the Jewish *El*, *Elohim*, *Eloah*, *Elohai*, and *El Shaddai*) is found used as a component of many names of chief deities among the Semites who were represented as bulls, and meant 'the strong one' (or simply 'God') and hence we find, 'the bull, El.'[117] And here too there was an aquatic dimension: in Canaanite religion, 'in order to visit El, the gods have to journey to the region known as the "source of the two rivers, the fountain of the two deeps."'[118] Overall, this practice of representing Yahweh as a 'bull' was operative from about 1350 BC and remained *en vogue* until about 600 BC, after which the Jews seem to have collectively become much more reserved in terms of iconographic representations of the divine.[119] One final point: even Moses' association with the Levites indicates his association with bulls (and thus water),[120] 'Levi' stemming from, in Waterman's view, Assyrian *lû*, meaning 'bull,' and thus, 'a Levite would then be first of all a man of the Lû (image), and then a member of a gild [sic] of that name.'[121] And the foregoing analysis also indicates that Jerome's translation of Exodus 34:29, in which he renders the Hebrew קָרַן (*qā·ran*)[122] as *cornuta* (horn),[123] was probably accurate and potentially not in the metaphorical sense—after meeting

[110] For this use of 'ephod' in the sense of the sheathing of an image, see ibid., 240; *BDB* 65=Strong 646. Cf. Isaiah 30:22.
[111] For commentary, see ibid., 236ff. 'The whole incident as thus interpreted gives another instance of the Baal-bull-cult as a form of Yahweh-worship, for it is perfectly evident from the older Gideon source that he is a loyal Yahweh-worshipper, and is not in the least conscious of any defection from Yahweh on the part of the people, which might account for Israel's humiliation at the hands of Midian.'
[112] Here ephod is in reference to the bovine idol. See ibid., 241.
[113] The same ephod now in a different location. See ibid., 241.
[114] Ephod again used in reference to the bovine idol of Yahweh. See ibid., 247ff.
[115] Here in both cases the bull is mentioned outright (as a calf).
[116] See especially Süring, *The Horn-Motif in the Hebrew Bible and Related Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Iconography*, *passim,* but particularly 273-299; H.T. Obbink, The Horns of the Altar in the Semitic World, especially in Jahwism, *JBL* 56 (1937), 45; S.A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 29.
[117] W.F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths,* The Jordan Lectures 1965 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 120.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Waterman, Bull-worship in Israel, *passim*.
[120] Theodoret even traced all the watery philosophies of antiquity back to Moses. Cf. Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 2.50.
[121] Waterman, Bull-worship in Israel, 248.
[122] Often translated as 'shone,' as in 'send out rays,' the Hebrew also means 'display horns.' See BDB 902a=Strong 7160). The root is קֶרֶן (*qeren*), 'horns,' so BDB 901b=Strong 7161.
[123] Jerome's translation reads: *cumque descenderet Moses de monte Sinai tenebat duas tabulas testimonii et ignorabat quod cornuta esset facies sua ex consortio sermonis Dei* / 'And when Moses came down from the Mount Sinai, he held the two tables of the testimony, and he knew not that his face was horned from the conversation of the Lord.' Translation from the Douay–Rheims Bible.

Figure 27: Compilation of examples of Moses wearing a horned hat from the Aelfric Paraphrase. Image assembled from the British Library's digital document. Inv. Cotton MS Claudius B IV.

with Yahweh, who was depicted in art as a man-faced bull, Moses, a member of the bull guild, came down with the testament and the people were afraid because he too exhibited horns (possibly as two horns/rays of light, or perhaps one of the horned helmets pervasive during that time period), which is perfectly appropriate for the circumstances.[124] In any case, the idea that Yahweh (or Yahweh-Baal, in some cases) was represented in the form of a 'bull' is widely recognized in the literature.

But in terms of man-faced bulls specifically, as opposed to regular bulls, Waterman points to the iconography of the cherubim (הַכְּרֻבִים), and adds the following observation:

> ...Ezekiel, in spite of his [cherub's] mixed figures, clearly implies that all the feet of his creatures were the feet of the ox, the conclusion of this analogy is scarcely to be avoided that the bodies and lower limbs were those of a bull. And, when Ezekiel gives

[124] For an analysis of a horned Moses in Medieval art, see R. Mellinkoff, *The Horned Moses in Medieval Art and Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970). She argues, convincingly, that Jerome deliberately chose 'horned' rather than 'glorified' since he had both translations available, but that he meant it metaphorically. I think the historical context of c. 1300 BC indicates, as Waterman said, that Moses was a member of the Lu guild, hence a horned hat is perfectly fitting. This, indeed, is what we find on the earliest illustrations of a horned Moses, from the *Aelfric Paraphrase* (Figure 27), which Mellinkoff connects with Anglo-Saxon-Scandinavian motifs (Ibid., 138-9). For an example of the images from this 11th century manuscript, see ibid., figs. 13-24. For a historical analysis of the root *qrn*, see Süring, *The Horn-Motif in the Hebrew Bible and Related Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Iconography*, 38-111.

> prominence to the human face of the cherub with indications also that it was a standing feature, the likeness to the human-headed, winged bulls of Assyria is too close to be accidental.[125]

In other words, Ezekiel's description is embellished (or inspired via revelation, if one prefers), but looking at the sources he draws from,[126] three things are consistent: human face, ox feet, and wings, and therefore the actual sculptures available to him (and presumably served as the prototype for all these variations) were the earlier colossal cherubim of Solomon's temple, which were winged man-faced bulls similar to the Assyrian tradition.[127] Indeed, the very word *cherub/kerub* has been directly connected with man-faced bulls through the Assyrian *kirubu*, which is tantamount to *šêdu*, a deity depicted in the form of a winged man-faced bull.[128] Thus, the large, apotropaic cherubim we find described throughout the Old Testament (including those at Solomon's temple) looked virtually the same as the large, apotropaic man-faced bulls utterly pervasive in the region throughout the time period in question (and many of them also seem to have had an aquatic dimension).[129]

Given this analysis, in Exod. 25:16, in which the cherubim atop the Ark of the Covenant (*eduth*) are discussed, one should not consider them as resembling Christian anthropomorphic angels as often depicted in popular culture. Rather, it was two winged man-faced bulls, an apt employment of aquatic/fluvial iconography since the word for covenant is at the very least related to the word for 'high/divine water,' and a winged man-faced bull is the iconic equivalent of 'high/divine water.'[130] In Figure 28a the reader will find my schematic rendition of the Ark, which I think probably resembles the original in terms of the basic features. I employ two winged man-faced bulls (cherubim) kneeling in an act of propitiation. This iconic posture probably emerges from the recumbent man-faced bull type and comes from the Near East, later becoming widespread on Greek coinage, and makes terrific sense given that the figures were part of the כַּפֹּרֶת (*kapporeth*), or 'mercy seat,' which operated as the focal point for atonement. This iconographic appropriation seems all the more fitting when one recognizes that Ezekiel's vision of the cherubim takes place on the banks of a river in Chaldea (Mesopotamia), an area

[125] Waterman, Bull-worship in Israel, 252. By mixed figures he means that the cherubim had four faces, the foremost being that of a man, but on its sides that of an eagle, ox, and lion. These mixed features might be indicative of their watery nature (thus just like Acheloios is a shapeshifter, these, too, possess the power of morphability). Whether or not the original ark incorporated all of these is unclear, but I believe these additional descriptive elements (multi-headed) are later interpolations or mere embellishments, since there is no comparison in second millennium art, but plenty of winged man-faced bulls.

[126] Ibid., 250. 'The chief ingredients are the cherubim of the inner temple, the oxen of the molten sea, the bronze laver bases with their four wheels, the high altar, and the throne of the king, but out of this highly involved monstrum certain general features emerge: (1) all the living creatures have wings; (2) the human countenance of the creatures is a prominent and constant feature of the cherubim wherever their faces appear; (3) all their feet were the feet of the ox. These constant features would point to the original cherubim of Solomon's temple.'

[127] Ibid., 249ff. See also *The Holy Bible*, 695, note to Ezek. 1:5.

[128] For the etymology, see Strong 3742. This theory was originally put forth by Delitzsch, but Feuchtwang, and, later, Budge, argued against the combination. Delitzsch later refined his theory, claiming that *cherub/kerub* was connected to Assyrian *karubu* ('mighty'), but there too it is an epithet of a bull deity. I believe the original etymology is correct, since Delitzsch was unaware of the aquatic dimension to both iconographies. For the discussion and sources, see C. Adler, *et al. The Jewish Encyclopedia. Volume 4: Chazars—Dreyfus Case* (New York : KTAV, 1964), 13-16. For the *šêdu*, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 12-15.

[129] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* Chapters 1-2.

[130] For the iconography, see also S. Dalley, The Influence of Mesopotamia upon Israel and the Bible, *The Legacy of Mesopotamia*, edited by S. Dalley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 57-83.

Figure 28a: The Ark of the Covenant, featuring two cherubim in the form of winged man-faced bulls, kneeling in act of propitiation, with heads toward the mercy seat. Author's drawing.

quite literally bursting with man-faced bull iconography for thousands of years.[131]

Most importantly, again following Waterman, when it comes to Yahweh himself and the passage in I Kings 12:28, 'Behold thy Gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt,' and its parallel in Exod. 32:4, 'These are thy Gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt,' he makes the point that at this stage 'the cherubim had already been identified with Yahweh' (Figure 28b).[132] This is justified for a few reasons. First, the use of the plural, 'Gods,' indicates that we have two figures worshipped and this was likely the cherubim now conflated with Yahweh. Hence, the figures created by Jeroboam were distributed and worshipped as a pair between Bethel and Dan, for the people would travel to each site (I Kings 12:29-30) and this became (וַיְהִי/*way·hî*) a sin.[133] Moreover, as Waterman points out, when Jerome says the people have gone to Jerusalem long enough, the implication is that the new practices in the north mimic those same practices in the south, hence the iconography was not something new created in the north.[134] Finally, the application of man-faced bull iconography to Yahweh also makes sense since bull iconography alone would not explain how man was created in the 'image and likeness' of Yahweh—but add a human face to the bull and the cultic tradition is consistent with the creation stories. In fact, the Hebrew in Gen. 1:26 is וּנְתוּמְדֵכ (*kiḏ·mū·ṯê·nū*, according to our likeness), which is rooted in דְּמוּת (*demuth*, likeness, similitude), a word used in Ezekiel in reference to the very faces of the cherubim (cf. Ezek. 1:10). This is an important concept that has been overlooked in the study of bull worship in relation to Yahweh (indeed, overlooked by Waterman himself). If we are to maintain that man is in the image of Yahweh and include the evidence that Yahweh was worshipped as a bull, the only tenable solution is

[131] Mesopotamia means quite literally 'between two rivers,' and we find evidence of man-faced bulls there throughout antiquity, and especially during so-called 'Chaldean' times.
[132] Waterman, Bull-worship in Israel, 253. Figure 28b might be a representation of Yahweh as a gold man-headed bull. It is a reclined man-headed bull with conical cap, made of sheet-gold in a similar fashion to the descriptions of the Old Testament, in which the bulls are referred to as 'ephod.' The underside includes a portion of silver sheet and a ferrous fragment, indicating ancient repair. A certain Dr. Ogden, when examining the piece, noted, 'mode of manufacture is consistent with manufacture in the Early Bronze Age, a date perhaps also suggested by the lack of wings, but the iron component would be more expected in the Early Iron Age. ... It is perhaps not impossible that the gold human-headed bull, decorating a silver vessel or other object, was made in the early Bronze Age then lost or buried. Then ... it was rediscovered in a damaged state, repaired ... and mounted on an iron component....' I believe he is mostly correct. This could very well be an Israelite Bronze Age depiction of Yahweh that was refurbished over the years, before being lost perhaps sometime in the 7th to 6th century BC, when the Temple was sacked. It is notable, too, that this figure has a totally different style from all contemporaneous man-headed bulls, indicating that the culture that produced it was not Babylonian, Assyrian, or Achaemenid (the latter of which was the seller's description) but perhaps Canaanite or, as I think, Israelite.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.

Figure 28b: Ephod of Yahweh? Sheet-gold 'ephod,' the underside including a portion of silver sheet and a ferrous fragment, with ancient repair. Image courtesy of TimeLine Auctions, Ltd. February 2021, lot 0260.

that by 'likeness' we mean face, just as it is used today when one comments that an individual has the likeness of a particular parent—he or she has the same face. Thus Yahweh, too, appears to have been represented as a man-faced bull, starting at least around the last quarter of the second millennium (but in my view, potentially much earlier).[135] Ultimately, the only thing missing from Waterman's rather brilliant analysis, it seems, was the connection of the iconography to water, which is the final piece of the puzzle: Yahweh as a man-faced bull is indicative of the aquatic extension of Yahweh, as divine water (the seemingly most salient part of His pervasive immanence). This aquatic dimension explains why water has such tremendous power and importance in the Old Testament and helps understand how atonement is embedded in the sacrificial bull.[136]

In the final analysis, it seems that the evidence suggests the following: water is an integral component to early Jewish cultic sites; water is qualitatively separate from all other created beings in the early Jewish tradition; Yahweh frequently employs a cloud in his earthly appearances; Yahweh rather frequently uses water to orchestrate His will (both to create, sustain, and destroy life); the covenant had an aquatic dimension at its core, perhaps as indicated in the etymology of *eduth* but almost certainly on the iconography of the physical structure that housed the testament; many early Jewish practices involve horns and the sacrifice of bulls; the cherubim were depicted as man-faced bulls in Jewish art; and, finally, Yahweh was openly worshipped in the form of a man-faced bull, indicating an association between Yahweh, divine water, and the related notions of sacrifice and atonement—for the very mercy seat from which Yahweh appears as a cloud to his people has important aquatic and bovine dimensions. Given all this, one can make a strong case that the tradition of Yahweh had a profound influence of Thales, especially if we follow Cicero and thinkers in that stream of thought, since they posit that, for Thales, God is the intelligence that shapes the waters, just as in the opening of Genesis.[137] Hence, Theodoret recommends we trace Thales' doctrine through Homer and Orpheus back to Moses.[138] And he might be correct.

[135] Passively suggested in Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 97-9.
[136] On Judaean coinage we even find the double cornucopia becomes an emblem of the Hasmonean dynasty, indicative of the cultic practices in Leviticus involving bull sacrifices (Figure 28c). For discussion, see N. Molinari, Concerning the Aquatic-Bovine Dimension to YHWH Worship and Its Relation to the Double Cornucopia on Jewish Coinage, *forthcoming.*
[137] Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.25-6 (ed. Pease) and Genesis 1:1-2.
[138] Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 2.50 (Th 330).

Figure 28c: Judaean double cornucopia on bronze prutah of Alexander Jannaeus, late second to early first century BC. Author's photo. Private collection.

Nūn

There are other myths that scholars have pointed to as possible influences on Thales. For instance, from Egypt, where Thales is said to have travelled and, indeed, learned from the priests (alt. 'prophets')[139] there, we find the character Nūn. Nūn was the oldest of the Egyptian 'gods' and represented the personification of the primeval waters out of which all things emerged, including the creator sun-god, Re, and 'original' god, Atum. Two stories are relevant and recounted by Kirk, Raven, and Schofield. The first does not actually mention Nūn but the context is clear in that the hill mentioned is the primeval hill that emerged out of the primordial water. It is from a 24th-century BC text from Heriopolis, which states, 'O Atum-Kheprer, thou wast on high on the (primeval) hill; thou didst arise as the ben-bird of the ben-stone in the Ben-House in Heliopolis...'[140] Here Atum-Kheprer is a conflation of two complementary deities, often representing the rising and setting sun. Atum is usually seen as the original deity in the Heliopolitan pantheon who created himself out of the primordial waters which he then returns to at the end of the cosmic cycle, and in this sense we have a 'divine water' that gives rise to all things.[141] Hence, much like all things emerge from water in the Thaletan scheme and are resolved back into it, so Atum, the original god, and all things in the universe, behave in the same fashion in Egyptian cosmography. It is unclear from this passage, however, if Atum is an eternal precondition of the primordial waters or spontaneously emerges from within these waters at some fixed point in time. The next text is a bit clearer on this final aspect. It is from the *Book of the Dead* and here we find Nūn named outright, 'I am Atum when I was alone in Nūn; I am Re in his (first) appearances, when he began to rule that which had been made.'[142] The *Book of the Dead* passage is interesting because it too features the original god, Atum, but

[139] We find 'priests' (ἱερεῦσιν, or variant) in Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 9-10.35 D-E=Th 115; Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 9.17.2-3=Th 214; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 1.27.52=Th 237; Iamblichus of Chalcis, *Vita Pythagorae* 2.11-12=Th 249; and Hesychius (?), *Sholia in Platonem Res publica* 600A1-10=Th 578. We find 'prophets' (*προφήταις*) in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.14.62.1-63.2=Th 202; 1.15.66.2=Th 204; and Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.4.17-18=Th 262.

[140] Trans. J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).

[141] R. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 99–101.

[142] Trans. J.A. Wilson, as quoted in Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers* 12.

this time conflated with Re, somehow emerging again from primordial water. In this instance, however, Atum and Re seem to coexist with the primordial waters much like Cicero's account in which Thales' considered God as that mind which gives shape to the waters. Re, in this respect, seems to operate almost as an epithet (or attribute) of Atum, since his first appearance does have a specific point in time.

In his work, Guthrie summarized the argument concerning Nūn in relation to Thales and early Greek cosmology, drawing particular attention to the observable properties of water. There he claimed that anyone who gained his livelihood from the banks of the Nile would have noticed the nearly instant emergence of new life when the flood waters receded, and so water was considered the origin of all things much like it was for Thales.[143] He also mentions that Plutarch claimed Egyptian priests would brag that both Thales and Homer derived their beliefs from them, so we have a very early source that attributes influence to Egypt.[144] A slightly earlier source, presumably Josephus, corroborates this (but adds the Chaldeans as well),[145] and Thales' travels to Egypt are well documented by various other ancient sources.[146] Combined, the case for Nūn is indeed plausible and along with Okeanos seems to have support in the ancient testimony.

There are, however, a few reasons to object to the argument for influence directly (or solely) from this watery figure. First, Thales might have been exposed first to Greek or Near Eastern myths that offered essentially the same story of everything emerging from watery chaos, and there is no reason to suppose he heard the Egyptian version first. Second, Thales is indeed said to have learned from the priests or prophets of Egypt, but as we saw in Chapter 6, that might indicate an influence from Acheloios, who is found at Egyptian sanctuaries during the time when Thales would have arrived. Finally, the Egyptian priests mentioned by Plutarch might have noticed the similarities among the various creation accounts and claimed to be the originators of the 'doctrine'—but that does not mean they truly were the source of influence. Still, the idea that Thales developed his philosophy analogously from the Egyptian deity Nūn is indeed plausible, particularly in terms of Thales' claim that the earth rests on water and that it was the origin of all things.

Poseidon and Aphrodite

There are two Milesian religious figures outside of Acheloios that need to be briefly mentioned. First is Poseidon, who is known as the earth shaker. We know, as a matter of fact, that Poseidon

[143] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 59. See also the discussion in Bernabé, The Primordial Water: Between Myth and Philosophy, 427.
[144] Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 34.364 (ed. Sieveking=Th 116).
[145] Josephus, *Contra Apionem,* 1.2 (ed. Reinach=Th 108).
[146] Pseudo-Plutarch, *Placita philosophorum* 1.3.875D8-F5 (Th 147); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.14.62.4 and 1.15.66.2 (Th 202 and Th 204, respectively); Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 9.17.2-3 (Th 214); Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, *Ad nations* 2.4.18 (Th 217); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.24 (Th 237); Iamblichus of Chalcis, *Vita Pythagorae* 2.11-12 (ed. V. Albrecht=Th 249); *In Nicomachi arithmeticam introductionem* 10-11 (ed. Klein= Th 253); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.4.17-18, 10.7.10, 14.14.1 (Th 262, Th 263, and Th 271, respectively); Theodoret, *Graecarum affecionum curatio* 1.12 (ed. Canivet=Th 326); Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Iulianum* 1.18.524C-D (Th 374); Proclus Diadochus, *In primum Euclidis Elementorum librum commentarium* Prologus 2.65.3-11 (ed. Friedlein=Th 380); Simplicius, *in Aristotelis quattuor libros de caelo commentaria* 522.13-18 (Th 426); Ṣiwān al-ḥikma, 13-17, 176-187, 398-416, (Th 499, Th 500, and Th 501, respectively); Al-Bīrūnī, *Al-āṯār al-bāqiya 'an al-qurūn al-ḫāliya* 27.14-21 (ed. Sachau=Th 507); Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Ta'rīḫ al-ḥukamā'* 107.7-14 (Th 551); Theodorus Metochites, *Semeioseis Gnomikai* 14.2.2 (ed. Hult=Th 557c); Hesychius (?), *Scholia in Platonem: Res publica* 600A1-10 (ed. Greene=Th 578).

was worshipped by the Milesians very early on. An altar on the Cape of Poseidon is located just south of Miletos, about 7 km from Didyma, the main sanctuary used by the Milesians.[147] The date of this altar is c. 575 BC, well within Thales' time frame, and offers an appealing option for possible mythological and cultic sources for Thales' philosophy. Strabo actually reports that the altar was constructed by Neleus, the mythical founder of Miletos, though the dates he gives do not actually match up with reality.[148] In any case, perhaps Thales' idea that the earth rests on water was influenced by the beliefs concerning Poseidon, since he was the 'earthshaker' and the explanations given for earthquakes by Thales are (presumably) based on the idea that the earth rests on water.[149] Surely, Thales would have exposure to the cult since birth, being a native of Miletos.

The second Milesian figure is Aphrodite, who was, as Greaves demonstrated, worshipped in Miletos as a sea goddess.[150] He points specifically to the following epithets used at Miletos and/or its colonies: *Euploia* (good sailing), *Pontike* (of the open sea), *Nauarchis* (guardian of ships), *Aphrogeneia* (foam born), and *Ourania* (celestial).[151] The idea of a female sea goddess is certainly intriguing, since it encompasses notions of birth and fertility, and when considered alongside Acheloios (with whom she is closely affiliated), is reminiscent of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian accounts that feature various aquatic deities (both male and female) playing a role in the emergence of the cosmos. Indeed, the fact that Aphrodite was not created but emerged from the sea is reminiscent of the Homeric, Near Eastern, and Egyptian cosmographies in which the gods themselves allegedly emerged from (divine) water. In these cases, then, Aphrodite is also a potential hometown source of influence for Thales. But more interesting still is the notion of a multiplicity of aquatic deities all operative in the same location, so for Miletos we have Poseidon and Aphrodite (and Acheloios, for that matter), and this is somewhat similar to the Near East, with Apsu and Tiamat, and also Egypt, with Atum-Kheprer and Atum-Re. Specifically, a multiplicity of deities sharing some underlying watery nature might be indicative of the sentiment behind Thales' notion that 'all things are full of gods,' since θεῶν (*theôn*) likely refers to (divine) water.[152]

Dodona

In a somewhat similar vein, at Dodona, Herodotus tells us that early on, the Pelasgians 'called upon the gods (θεοῖσι / *theoîsi*) without giving proper name or appellation to any...for as yet they had not heard of such. They called them gods (θεοὺς / *theoùs*) from the fact that, besides setting everything in order, they maintained all the dispositions.'[153] It was not until sometime later, as a result of foreign, and allegedly Egyptian, influence, that the Pelasgians began to use proper names and epithets for the gods (θεοί), which occurred only after asking the oracle for permission (presumably the oracle saw no substantial difference and so allowed it).[154] Socrates

[147] Armin von Gerkan, *Der Poseidonaltar bei kap Monodendri* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1915), 443-466, pls. 1-27; William Bell Dinsmoor, *The architecture of ancient Greece: an account of its historic development* (New York: Norton, 1975), 140, Figure 51.
[148] Strabo, *Geographica* 14.633.
[149] Servius, Fr. 344 (ed. Kern).
[150] Greaves, The Cult of Aphrodite in Miletos and Its Colonies, 28f; cf. also Greaves, Miletos and the sea: a stormy relationship, 39-61.
[151] Ibid., 31.
[152] Pinto, 'All things are full of gods': Souls and Gods in Thales, 259. See also Chapter 3.
[153] Herodotus, *Histories* 2.52.
[154] Ibid. In the Conclusion to this book, we will discuss this passage in relation to the transition from mythology to a demythologized account that was inclusive of the gods of myth.

actually flushes out what it looked like before these names appeared. He claims, while sitting in a shrine to Acheloios,[155] that early on at Dodona, natural objects, like trees and rocks and rivers, directly communicated with man, somewhat akin to an Adamic knowledge and presumably by virtue of their nature as exhibiting *θεοί*.[156] In any case, given this transition from religious practices in which one believed in more ubiquitous gods (where essentially all things are full of gods) to practices that employed proper names and epithets (still full of gods), we should take into consideration Dodonaean pre-mythologized[157] accounts of divinity when assessing the character of Thales' philosophy. This will be especially apparent when we examine the forthcoming connection to Acheloios, who was worshipped at Dodona, [158] and our reading of the *Phaedrus,* which takes place in a microcosm to Dodona, but we will have to leave that discussion until later. For now, however, the idea that Thales was familiar with a multiplicity of deities and also (presumably) the stories of the origin of their names at Dodona is an important part of the puzzle to bear in mind as we attempt to describe Thales' conceptual scheme at the origin of philosophy, and in particular how the clash of cultures influenced the thinker.

In the final analysis, then, the mythological wellspring runs very deep, and there is very good reason to think that Hippias and Theodorus were at least partially correct, and that Thales derived his theories about water from earlier thinkers, whether the aquatic myths from around the Mediterranean or the pre-mythological conception of divinity espoused by the Dodonaean Selli—or, most likely in fact, a combination of all of them. Does this then mean that Thales contributed nothing new to intellectual history? The answer is a decisive no. But before we can give a truly satisfying rationale for our answer, we need to reexamine Acheloios, because an analysis of the Acheloios traditions reveals that he was the most influential force in the development of philosophy proper, and it is Thales' engagement with Acheloios that gives birth to something truly unique.

[155] See Chapter 12 for discussion. The shrine operates as a microcosm of Dodona.
[156] Plato, *Phaedrus* 275b.
[157] Not demythologized, since it appears never to have been mythologized.
[158] Ephorus, *FgrH* 27= Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.18.6.

Chapter 9

Thales and Acheloios

'All Things are Full of Gods'

-Thales[1]

We saw in Chapter 4 that Acheloios was equated with water and, to judge from the seemingly earliest rendition of the *Iliad* and corresponding Orphic tradition, seen as the ultimate source of water. Although that cosmographical positioning is helpful in establishing influence from Acheloios instead of Okeanos, who is never equated with water, there are many more indications that Acheloios was a source of influence for Thales. This chapter is therefore dedicated to drawing a deeper parallel between the cult of Acheloios and Thales' philosophy, as well as exhibiting some provisional evidence supporting the idea that the mythos of Acheloios is conducive to the abstraction necessary for philosophical activity. The parallel between Acheloios and Thales' philosophy can be expressed on a variety of levels and is essentially justifiable regardless of the interpretation one takes of the specific details of Thales' philosophy (Aristotelian *ἀρχή* à la the Hegelian tradition or otherwise). In the first section of this chapter, we will examine Acheloios in relation to the idea of a qualified threefold *ἀρχή* (briefly sketched in Chapter 3), namely, *ἀρχή* as originating, underlying/governing, and final principle. The second section of this chapter is dedicated to an examination of the notion of the local embodiments of Acheloios in relation to the general Presocratic concern with the One and the Many. Here I will look at Gurthrie's and Finkelberg's assessments of the One-Many problem and argue that the Acheloios tradition appears to have watered the cognitive seeds giving rise to the subsequent abstraction identifying *ὕδωρ* (divine water) as the ultimate principle that explains the manifold world of appearances. Following this analysis I will present what I believe is the most accurate and comprehensive account of Thales' worldview to date. Here I'll start by examining the various accounts of *δαίμονες* (*daimones*) traditionally attributed to Thales and advocate, with recourse to Acheloios, in favor of Finkelberg's general outline of Thales' conceptual scheme, with a few qualifications.

Acheloios as Predecessor of Delineated Threefold Ἀρχή

The First from Which Things Come-to-Be

Aristotle tells us that the earliest conceptions of a philosophical *ἀρχή* indicated, in one essential way, 'the first from which things come-to-be' (*Meta.*983b9). Indeed, this is the primary meaning of *ἀρχή* in Homeric Greek,[2] and likewise the etymology of the term and related words with the same *ἀρχ-* root indicate a similar concept.[3] But, aside from his role as source of the

[1] Aristotle, *de Anima* 1.5.411a7-8.
[2] Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of Homeric Greek*, 56.
[3] See especially Maciej Roszkowski, The significance of the semantic range of the term *ἀρχή* in the thought of sixth century Greek philosophers analyzed on the basis of the meanings of certain words containing the *ἀρχ-* root in early Greek poetry, *Littera Antiqua* 9 (2014): 42-81. His analysis also reveals the root *ἀρχ-* is used to form words that denote command, hence 'governing,' might be relevant to Thales' *ἀρχή* in a semantic overlap.

world's rivers (discussed in the next section), in what specific way can Acheloios be said to be an 'originating' deity, or an ultimate source of generation from which things emerge, and hence the immediate predecessor and underlying source for an abstract cosmological position concerning *ὕδωρ*? One important clue is the various iconographies used to depict Acheloios—Acheloios being a shape-shifter in myth and art. True, his standard form was a man-faced bull, but he took many other shapes: a bull, a serpent, a serpent with the head and torso of a horned man, a man (sometimes in women's clothing), an 'ox-fronted man,' and a bearded and horned man. Some early examples even show him as a man-faced bull but with Ibex horns or with a distinctly feminine face. These different forms appear early and were certainly available to Thales. For instance, the Berezan fragment featuring Acheloios with an Ibex horn, the Ionian gem featuring a serpent-headed tale emerging from Acheloios' back, the various Acheloios centaurs from Cyprus, and even the serpent-like teeth on the Acheloios stater all indicate that the notion of morphability is as old as Thales and indeed stretches back to Acheloios' ancestors, as indicated by the mixanthropic and theriomorphic nature of the various eastern predecessors.

In literature, the idea of shape-shifting is recorded only after Thales, but Sophokles' beautiful depiction clearly draws from a very ancient tradition (*Trach.* 9-14):[4]

> *... Ἀχελῷον λέγω, ὅς μ' ἐν τρισὶν μορφαῖσιν ἐξήτει πατρός, φοιτῶν ἐναργὴς ταῦρος, ἄλλοτ' αἰόλος δράκων ἑλικτός, ἄλλοτ' ἀνδρείῳ κύτει βούπρῳρος· ἐκ δὲ δασκίου γενειάδος κρουνοὶ διερραίνοντο κρηναίου ποτοῦ.*
>
> ...I mean Achelous, who came in three shapes to ask my father for me, at some times manifest as a bull, at others as a darting, coiling serpent, and again at others with a man's trunk and a bull's head; and from his shaggy beard there poured streams of water from his springs.[5]

Albeit a late source, Ovid likewise presents Acheloios as a shapeshifter in his *Metamorphosis*. There, it is again during the battle with Herakles that he changes form in an attempt to best his opponent: 'I had recourse to my arts, and glided out of his grasp in the form of a long snake. But when I wound my body into twisting coils, and darted out my forked tongue and hissed fiercely at him, the hero of Tiryns only laughed...'[6] This depiction of Acheloios as shape-shifter expresses the idea that he can become essentially anything—at one moment a serpent and then, in the next, a completely different creature, be it a man, bull, man-faced bull, or something else. Thus, Acheloios' morphability indicates that his mythos implicitly incorporates the idea of water possessing the power to become or give rise to something else entirely, hence the similarity to the Aristotelian conception of the *ἀρχή*.[7] In Aristotle's description from *Metaphysics* 983b17, Thales was proposing an *ἀρχή* of nature (*τὸ δ' ὕδωρ ἀρχὴν τῆς φύσεως*), i.e., a single originating principle that could account for all of nature in

[4] Sophokles was certainly retelling a famous story, for we find the scene of Acheloios and Herakles wrestling between Oineus and Deianeira on a Corinthian vase dating to the first-to-second quarter of the sixth century. See Isler, Acheloos, no. 246.
[5] Translation Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles: Antigone, Women of Trachis, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 132-3.
[6] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.62-67.
[7] See also the discussion in Bernabé, The Primordial Water: Between Myth and Philosophy, 433, for discussion of the morphability of water in its influence on Thales.

its rich diversity. Hence, the manifold world of appearances was construed to be, in one way or another, transformations from an original, underlying principle, ὕδωρ (divine water), just as these various creatures are transformations of Acheloios, who underlies all of the different appearances as their originating source. In a word, just as Acheloios can change form and become something else entirely, so too can ὕδωρ when conceived as the ἀρχή of nature (and this connection would indeed support either the reductionist monism or reservoir monism espoused in the literature).[8]

There are other basic characteristics of the mythos of Acheloios that position him as a deity responsible for the emergence of life, as further evidence of his role as an 'originating deity.' For example, consider his essential role in agriculture. The story of the cornucopia, as we learned from Strabo, refers (at least to some degree) to the regulation of rivers and growth of crops. In this sense, Acheloios is an originating deity insofar as it is via water that crops are able to grow—they owe their origin to him; indeed, as Aristotle tells us, in reference to the ἀρχή, 'the seeds of all things have a moist nature.'[9] This originating capacity is also the primary reason La Chau and Le Blonde argued that the iconography of the man-faced bull was primarily an agricultural allegory, since the iconography was inherently associated with the origin of crops.[10] Hence, also, we can refer again to Pindar, where it is the springs of Acheloios that nourish the melodious reeds—it is by virtue of the chthonic Acheloios, the power of the springs of Europe, that the reeds burst forth.[11] Ultimately, in this role as a deity instrumental in the origin and growth of things, Acheloios tacitly exhibits the qualities of a watery ἀρχή as origin, and so there is really no need to look to Apsu or Nūn for the origin of this idea.

Acheloios' role in various rites of passage positions him in a similar way. We know, for instance, that there were important lustratio rituals at birth or other significant times like when a young boy or girl officially became a man or a woman.[12] In fact, babies were often named after their native river in antiquity, such as the 5th-century Kephisodotos (gift of the river Kephisos).[13] The role of Acheloios and other river gods was thus well integrated into the cultic practices concerning birth and transition.[14] We even see similar practices today in the Catholic tradition with the sacrament of baptism, in which, after the '*creatura aqua*' is exorcised and the water is poured over the initiate,[15] said individual is literally configured to Christ, solidifying the individual's identity as belonging to Christ.[16] It is precisely Acheloios' role (as divine water) in

[8] For the differentiation, see Barney, History and Dialectic in *Metaphysics* A 3, 85ff.
[9] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b.
[10] G.de La Chau and F.T.M. de Baculard d'Arnaud Le Blond, *Description des principales pierres gravées du cabinet de S.A.S. Monseigneur le duc d'Orleans* (Paris: Pissot, 1780), 123-126.
[11] Pindar, Fr. 249b (ed. S.-M.).
[12] Evy J. Håland, Take, Skamandros, My Virginity, in *The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing, and Hygiene from Antiquity through the Renaissance*, edited by Cynthia Kosso and Anne Scott (Leiden: Brill, 2009): 125. For the relation to Acheloios specifically, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 62-3. These lustratio practices also stem from the Near East and involved man-faced bulls even then: On a cylinder seal from Northern Syria dating to the beginning of the 2nd millennium, we find two ithyphallic man-faced bulls ready to pour water over a nude female (See Winter, *Frau und Göttin: Exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im Alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt*, no. 74).
[13] Jennifer Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults: A Guide* (London: Routledge, 2007), 152.
[14] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 62ff.
[15] Rev. Philip T. Weller, *The Roman Ritual, In Latin and English, with Rubrics and Plainchant Notation, Volume III: The Blessings* (Boonville, NY, Preserving Christian Publications, 2016), 11. Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* VI.xix.43-50, in which the description of the sanctifying power of water is related to the opening of Genesis, discussed above in Chapter 8 in its relation to the Thaletan world view.
[16] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1272: 'Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is configured to

the liminal aspect of birth and identity that presages *ἀρχή* as that from which things come-to-be, in the sense that one's birth and identity are fundamentally linked to water.

Ultimately, aside from the equating of Acheloios with water, it is his ability to shapeshift, his role in the growth of crops, and his relation to the identity of individuals that associates him with the origin and identity of things (particularly living things), and this at the very least foreshadows the notion of *ὕδωρ* as origin of all things. Why think that Thales had an abstract idea of *ἀρχή* in search of a candidate with such an appealing mythological and cultic source to draw from? Certainly, the idea of *ὕδωρ* as originating principle was tacitly expressed in the Acheloios tradition.

That Which Underlies and Governs All Things

We also saw evidence in Chapter 3 that, because of the terms Aristotle uses, it is inaccurate to call Thales' *ἀρχή* a constitutive principle,[17] and instead *ὕδωρ* for Thales either operates as a governing or underlying principle (likely both), because we know the earth rests on water and that water maintains a governing role in the cosmos.[18] Acheloios seems best to serve as a predecessor for both these refined conceptions of the *ἀρχή* as well, and in four ways: the dual meaning of *ἴς* and the related notion of assimilation (here underlying and governing); Acheloios' aforementioned role in the upbringing of youths (also governing); his position as the source of all waters (here underlying); and his chthonic nature (also underlying).

The idea that Acheloios operated as a governing agent is probably best exhibited through an examination of the Greek term *ἴς* (from *ἴς Ἀχελωίου*). On the one hand, it means sinew (*ἶνας / înas*), as in 'the sinews of Acheloios;' but on the other hand, it can also mean strength.[19] D'Alessio's brilliant assessment as it relates to Acheloios thus claims:

> The Greek word ἴς ('strength') is frequently used in the nominative and in the instrumental ἶφι, and only thrice in the accusative...where the form ἶν, though always followed by a vowel, does not seem to stand, from an etymological point of view, for elided ἶνα. The nasal is the desinence of the accusative and does not belong to the root, which is the same as Latin *vīs* (accusative *vīm*). It is only in later lexicographic sources that the word is connected to a root –ἰν. At least from Homeric epic onwards, on the other hand, another almost homophonic, and probably etymologically connected word was current, both in singular and plural: ἴς (genitive ἰνός, and plural nominative ἶνες), its meaning roughly corresponding to 'sinew'. Both for the Greek poet of this age and for his public, the words ἶνας Ἀχελωίου would unavoidably evoke the meaning 'the sinews of Acheloios.' It is plausible, of course, that the homophony between the two words, and the structural role of 'sinews' in the body, may have easily led to a semantic overlap.[20]

Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with an indelible spiritual mark (character) of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation. Given once for all, Baptism cannot be repeated.'

[17] Cf. Pinto, 'All things are full of gods': Souls and Gods in Thales, 252.

[18] If constitutive principle, then the influence of Acheloios would not be lessened, since he *is* water.

[19] Pindar, Fr. 249b S.-M.=*P.Oxy* II (1899) 64, schol. of Ammonius on *Il.* 21.195.

[20] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 24.

D'Alessio suggests an early, Near Eastern etymology: we find *ina īnīša* at *Enuma Elish* 5.55, meaning 'in her eyes,' but *īnīša* can mean either 'eye' or 'spring.' Because of this (albeit slightly different) duality D'Alessio suggests this root is related to the Greek *ἶνας*, where we find a partially matching double meaning yet again.[21] Indeed, a look at Homeric usage of the derivatives of *ἴς* indicates the duality in the term predates Thales and would certainly be available for him to draw from. For instance, at *Iliad* 21.188-191 we find: 'And over him Phoebus Apollo drew a dark cloud from heaven to the plain, and covered the entire place on which the dead man lay, lest before time the might of the sun should shrivel his flesh around his sinews (*ἴνεσιν*) and limbs.' The utter physicality of the use of *ἴνεσιν* (ínesin) here is unmistakable, and it should be noted that it usually concerned the sinews of an ox.[22] On the other hand, Homer also uses the connected term to mean something quite different. Homer, *Iliad*, 7.268ff: 'Then Aias in turn lifted on high a far greater stone, and swung and hurled it, putting measureless strength (*ἶν'*) behind it.' In this case, we have something altogether different; *ἶν* is employed in a way akin to an immaterial force, like soul (even though incoporeality would not be articulated for some time).[23] Thus, in this second case, it is not a sinew, but, rather, as Cunliffe says, the 'force exerted, strength put into effort.'[24] When we see *ἶνας Ἀχελωίου* and recognize it means the sinews of Acheloios, we should be cognizant of the semantic overlap and the related meaning of 'strength'—indeed, that was the original translation of '*ἶνας*.'[25] Furthermore, in Pindar we have 'power' explicitly: 'Formerly, the power (*ἴς*) of Acheloös, Europa's spring, and the streams of the Melas nourished the most melodious reed.'[26] This dual meaning of the term is philosophically significant. Essentially, the notion of *ἴς* and the related semantic overlap encompassing strength in its relation to sinew indicates that the Acheloios tradition presages a more delineated *ἀρχή* as 'governing'—just as all rivers, as sinews of Acheloios, are powered by Acheloios, their source of strength, so with Thales' *ἀρχή* all things, which emerge from *ὕδωρ*, are governed by it—for even the earth shakes from the underlying waters.

The idea of assimilation with Acheloios is another feature of his mythos that indicates a presaging of *ὕδωρ* as governing origin. The earliest evidence comes from his predecessors. First, it is believed that colossal Near Eastern man-faced bulls appearing at the sides of entrances and thrones represented a king's vanquished foes now bound to service.[27] In a similar vein, Asallúhi's priests would assimilate with him in cult, while adorning man-faced bull masks.[28] In later times this belief in assimilation becomes more pronounced in the evidence, for instance in the story of Euythmos of Locri and his assimilation with the local river, Kaikinos, who was depicted in the form of Acheloios on some votive tablets (probably there representing Acheloios Kaikinos Euthymos).[29] We'll see in Chapter 11 that this notion of assimilation with

[21] Ibid., 27. In Plato's discussion of Acheloios and Thales, the eye is described as the inlet of beauty to the soul: 'so the stream of beauty passes back into the beautiful one through the eyes, the natural inlet to the soul.' (*Phaedrus* 255d).
[22] Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of Homeric Dialect*, 202.
[23] Renehan, On the Greek Origins of the Concepts of Incorporeality and Immateriality, 105-138.
[24] Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of Homeric Dialect*, 202.
[25] Hence, D'Alessio suggests both meanings of *ἴς* were essentially valid and both translations are 'in a way' correct. D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 23.
[26] *πρόσθα μὲν ἴς Ἀχελωίου τὸν ἀοιδότατον Εὐρωπία κράνα Μέλ*[ανό]*ς τε ποταμοῦ ῥοαὶ τρέφον κάλαμον*. Trans. Race, *op.cit.* = *P.Oxy* II (1899) 64, schol. of Ammonius on *Il.* 21.195. Pindaric fragment quoted in the London papyrus on 21.195 (Fr. 249b, ed. S.-M.). D'Alessio rightly claims this phrase is connected to Dodona since 'Europa was the place...where a hundred springs mingled.' (D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 33.)
[27] A. Annus, *The God Ninurta: in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 117.
[28] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 14.
[29] Ibid., 87, 96.

Acheloios is an essential component to Sophokles' *Trachiniae*, where it is Herakles' sweat, hence the *ἵς Ἀχελωίου*, that initiates the process of redemption necessary for apotheosis, a clear example of the governing role of (divine) water.[30] We might also bring up in this context the assimilation recorded in the Cypriot prayer in which the devotee 'assumes the form of Acheloios.'[31] Indeed, on a related note, there is new evidence from Akarnania that magistrates, who were relegated to a religious function at the end of the 3rd century, assimilated with Acheloios in cultic practices and are featured on coinage exhibiting this fusion—they now lack a beard and feature distinctive faces that indicate the magistrates are now assimilated with the god, just like Euthymos of Locri.[32] Finally, and perhaps most importantly of all, the idea that the rivers of the world are the sinews of Acheloios means they are assimilated with him (though still maintaining local characteristics).

Philosophically speaking, what this all means in terms of the *ἀρχή* is that we have with Acheloios and the notion of assimilation the idea that people and rivers are not fully reducible to Acheloios (hence local differentiation), but via assimilation there occurs something of an interplay that is best captured in the sense of 'governing', and this same idea lies behind the second meaning of *ὕδωρ* as governing principle, for as Aristotle recounts, 'heat itself is generated from the moist and is *kept alive by it*'[33] (emphasis mine). Indeed, at Dodona, we find this very attribute of the waters beneath the Oak of Zeus—when a flame is brought near, it grows.[34] Furthermore, even in Etruscan inscriptions *Αυκηλως* means the 'overseer' of sunrise, with the indication that the sun emerges from and returns to the waters in the daily cycle, which would be observable by the sea peoples of antiquity.[35]

Many artifacts depict Acheloios in a liminal position which presumably occurs via this assimilating aspect of his divinity, and here we find iconographic evidence that Acheloios presages *ἀρχή* as governing—often found on the outskirts, never completely manifest, but absolutely paramount to the depicted scene nonetheless.[36] In Etruria, the best exemplar of a pure liminal agency is the Lampadario di Cortona, a magnificent chandelier with dozens of man-faced bull protomes that illuminated the tombs and indicated Acheloios' manifold and liminal status.[37] Attic reliefs play upon the same theme but execute it in a different way. So, for example, on such reliefs it is never the full body of Acheloios depicted, but instead either his protome appearing at the edge, or just his mask (perhaps including some shoulder) at the outer-rim of the sculpture. The earliest example of a protome used in this fashion is from late 5th-century Attica (Figure 29),[38] while the earliest mask is from the first quarter of the 4th century.[39] On all these objects, and there are many, Acheloios is positioned as a mediator, and here, too, the historical record indicates an extremely old tradition, predating both Acheloios and Thales. So, for instance, bucrania—usually with deliberately broken horns—were often

[30] Sophokles, *Trachiniae* 763-771.
[31] I. Kourion 131, 134, 138, 142.
[32] Molinari, Αχελομορφωθ: Magistrates of Akarnania. A Reconsideration of the Iconographic Fluctuations on Akarnanian Federal Coinage, *passim*.
[33] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b.
[34] Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 2.288. We'll discuss the liminal role of Acheloios at Dodona in Chapter 12, but see also Chapinal-Heras, *Experiencing Dodona: the development of the Epirote sanctuary from archaic to Hellenistic times,* 111-112.
[35] Semerano, *L'a favola del' indoeuropeo,* 77.
[36] Cf. e.g., Isler, Acheloos, no. 166-202.
[37] Late Archaic, now displayed at the Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca, Cortona, Italy.
[38] Ibid., 166.
[39] Isler, Acheloos, no. 173.

Figure 29: Late fifth-century BC votive relief sculpture featuring the forepart of Acheloios among other deities. Image Courtesy of Antikensammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Inv. 709.

placed in walls, as were votive plaques with various depictions of bull-men related to the man-faced bull tradition, serving in an apotropaic and liminal capacity.[40] Even some doorways in Sardinia took the physical form of a bull protome, signifying the water deity's liminal agency and also the notion of assimilation.[41] All of these earlier practices were incorporated into the cult of Acheloios,[42] and thus the position of Acheloios as a liminal figure and its cultic implications are good sources from which Thales could analogously develop the notion that *ὕδωρ* is a governing (liminal) principle.

Another important example of Acheloios' position as a 'governing' figure is the Xenokrateia relief, which features Acheloios and several other deities. The offerant, Xenokrateia, asks the gods to look after her son, Xeniades, specifically in regards to διδασκαλίας (*didaskalías*), or upbringing.[43] This indicates that Acheloios was associated with assisting an individual throughout life, underlying their activities as an apotropaic deity and, when necessary and God willing, taking on a governing role. Hence in Homer we find Achilles offer a lock of hair to a particular river upon reaching home safely—a kind thank you for helping him reach that point in life; in a very real way, Achilles offers a piece of himself to be fully incorporated back into the river.[44] Interestingly, Isidore of Seville claims a particular stone (*Galactitis*) from the Acheloios 'when rubbed...gives off a white fluid tasting of milk. When tied onto nursing

[40] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 4-5, and related bibliography for evidence of bucrania and 'false doors' in various cultures.
[41] Ibid., 5, 36ff.
[42] Ibid., 97-9 for an overview.
[43] *IG* II² 4548. See Jennifer Larson, *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Lore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 131, for discussion.
[44] Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults*, 152; Homer, *Iliad* 23.140-51.

women it makes their breasts productive. It is also said to make an infant's mouth water when hung around its neck.'[45] Here again we have a clear association of Acheloios and his role in the raising of children. These general cultic beliefs that associate Acheloios with upbringing are very old and do not emerge with Xenokrateia, Homer, or even Greece—man-faced bulls have been linked to upbringing in Mesopotamian accounts, and even the protection of children in the afterlife.[46] Ultimately, as a deity involved in the διδασκαλίας of individuals, the Acheloios tradition's cultic practices tacitly exhibited the notion of governing origin.

In terms of *ἀρχή* as underlying (and originating, for that matter), the most essential connection is the earlier versions of *Iliad* 21.194-7, which lack the line mentioning Okeanos, making Acheloios the source of all water: 'not even powerful Acheloios is a match for him, ~~nor the great strength of deep-flowing Okeanos~~, from whom all rivers and the whole sea, and all springs and the great wells flow.'[47] This is the earliest account we have and, if we follow Megakleides and Zenodotus, we should view it as indicative of the tradition Thales knew.[48] If Acheloios is the source of all water he is positioned in an underlying role from which all the waters of the world emerge (thus we find ἐξ οὗ πᾶσα θάλασσα from *P.Oxy* 0221, IX, 1-3). Hence, Thales' position that the earth rests on *ὕδωρ* is plausibly derived from this position of Acheloios as source of all water, and because Acheloios is more at home in Ionia when compared to Okeanos, we ought to accept the Acheloios narrative as having the most profound, direct influence on Thales.

Aside from the *Iliad* passage, the best evidence of Acheloios presaging an 'underlying' *ἀρχή* is his general role as a chthonic deity. All throughout Etruria, for instance, he is found in a context that indicates his close affiliation with the underworld and death: the Tarquinian tomb of the bulls, the aforementioned Lampadario di Cortona from Fratta, and various other artifacts accompanying the deceased.[49] In all cases, he operates as a chthonic figure, transitioning between the two worlds (hence Acheloios operated as a psychopomp, or 'conveyor' of souls).[50] These Etruscan traditions have an eastern origin, related, in part, to the cosmographical positioning of Apsu and Asallúhi, which seemingly transferred over to Acheloios as ultimate underlying source of water.[51] The Etruscan practices are also influenced by other subterranean and chthonic aspects of man-faced bull iconography used in ritual.[52] Most importantly, the very same forces that were influential in the Etruscan tradition were impacting the eastern Greek world, especially at Miletos (hence the availability to Thales). Appliqués and similar objects in the form of a mask of Acheloios demonstrate this widespread appearance. Originally, such pieces are found at various Phoenician contact points throughout the Mediterranean,[53] but then later, manufacture seems to have been mostly among Etruscans

[45] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* XVI.x.4.
[46] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 10. See also the Polish-Syria Expedition at Tell Arbid, 'Akkadian and Post-Akkadian Periods, in *Sector S-Step Trench*; W. Farber, Zur älteren akkadischen Beschwörungsliteratur, *ZA* 71 (Berlin 1981), 62.
[47] Trans. D'Alessio, *op.cit.*
[48] The positioning of Acheloios as source of water is of course strengthened, as demonstrated above, by the many authors who equate Acheloios with water, in addition to *P.Derv.* and *P.Oxy.*
[49] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 48-55.
[50] Ibid., 50-3.
[51] Ibid., 14f.
[52] For example, man-faced bulls were used as footrests for rulers in the Near East, indicating a chthonic dimension. Cf. Ibid., 10.
[53] Ibid., 20. Indeed, Thales may be of Phoenician descent.

Figure 30: Etruscan coffin applique in the form of a mask of Acheloios, c. fifth century BC. Image courtesy of Gorny & Mosch Giessener Münzhandlung GmbH. Auction 264, lot 98. Private collection.

Figure 31: Etruscan mirror, mid fourth century BC. Line drawing by Cameron Fritts, from the original by F.W.E. Gerhard. Object now in the National Etruscan Museen of Villa Giulia. Inv. 12988 (See Gerhard 347).

Figure 32: Etruscan mirror, late fourth century BC. Line drawing by Cameron Fritts, from the original by F.W.E. Gerhard. From the collection of Hrn. de Meester van Raveste. Current whereabouts unknown (See Gerhard 331b).

Figure 33: Etruscan mirror, fourth century BC. Line drawing by Cameron Fritts, from the original by F.W.E. Gerhard. Now in the Museen zu Berlin but uncertain inventory number (See Gerhard 310).

Figure 34: Etruscan mirror, c. fourth century BC. Line drawing by Cameron Fritts, from the original by F.W.E. Gerhard. From the collection of Prince Baberini, but current whereabouts unknown (See Gerhard 337).

(cf. Figure 30).[54] Nonetheless, such Etruscan pieces have been found as far away as Naukratis,[55] a Milesian colony, indicating the intercultural *koine* of the mythos of Acheloios. In any case, given these influences, when Seneca tells us that Thales' notion that the earth rests on water is explained by the fact that 'in every major earthquake new springs usually burst forth,'[56] it is easy to see the earlier mytho-religious influence. Asallúhi, as we saw, 'rises to the surface of the earth in springs and marshes, ultimately flowing as rivers.'[57] And, since Asallúhi emerges from Apsu in the same way that the rivers of the world are the sinews of Acheloios, and is the closest ancestor to the Greek tradition, the positioning of Acheloios as subterranean water (and source of power) and his sinews as the earthly manifestations is a compelling reason to think Acheloios served as a predecessor for Thales' notion of *ἀρχή* as underlying principle.

At least two artifacts from Magna Graecia physically depict Acheloios in this underlying role. Although both are late (350 BC and 300 BC, respectively), they emerge from a much earlier tradition and are worth including.[58] They are both decorative mirrors (Figures 31 and 32) that depict a mask of Acheloios situated beneath a scene depicting gods. The first shows a seated Zeus facing a youthful Herakles, behind Zeus is Hera, and, behind her, Ialaus (Herakles' nephew).[59] The second is similar, featuring Acheloios below the scene, and two winged figures above.[60] The winged figures represent Eros and Psyche and have interesting parallels to the interplay of Acheloios, Eros, and the soul in the *Phaedrus,* but we will leave the nuances of that discussion until later. There are two similar mirrors (Figure 33 and 34) not catalogued by Isler, but in my opinion both feature Acheloios. They incorporate a mask in the same position, but on one the face is feminized,[61] just like another mirror which names and features Acheloios, depicting him with long hair and feminine face (Figure 35).[62] The other has a bearded face,[63] but upon the head is vegetation, likely reflective of the tradition recounted by Ovid in which the broken horn was disguised with vegetation.[64] (These vegetative headdresses are extremely old, of Near Eastern

[54] Private collection. See also BMC 1875,0313.17.
[55] In the Fitzwilliam museum, according to the note for BMC 1875,0313.17.
[56] Seneca, *Natural Questions* 6.6.1-2 (Th 101).
[57] Whittaker, Milking the Udder of Heaven: A Note on Mesopotamian and Indo-Iranian Religious Imagery, 131.
[58] For the chthonic role of man-faced bulls in the Near East, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 5-15.
[59] Isler, Acheloos, no. 117= E. Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel*, Vol. IV (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1867), no. 347.
[60] Isler, Acheloos, no. 118= Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel*, no. 331b.
[61] Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel*, no. 310.
[62] Ibid., no. 340.
[63] Ibid., no. 337.
[64] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.99-100.

Figure 35: Etruscan mirror, second half of the fourth century BC. Line drawing by Cameron Fritts, from the original by F.W.E. Gerhard. Now in the Museum zu Berlin, but inventory number uncertain (See Gerhard 340).

origin, where we find (presumably chief) deities adorning them).[65] In any case, what is important about all these objects is that each features Acheloios as an underlying, foundational figure (particularly Figure 33 and Figure 34), upon which souls and even the gods reside, and this tradition, in which a watery man-faced bull occupies a chthonic position, also originates long before Thales and is an important source of influence.[66] Again, why presuppose Thales had an empty idea of *ἀρχή* in search of candidates with such fertile underlying cultic traditions?

That to Which All Things Return

The notion of assimilation with Acheloios is closely related to the transmigration of the soul, and the case for Acheloios' influence on Thales becomes even clearer when we look at his (Acheloios') role in death rituals. Although the chthonic dimension of Acheloios was expressed most conspicuously in Magna Graecia, it was nonetheless operative in Ionia.[67] Artifacts featuring Acheloios are very often found in tombs and the iconography played an essential part in some burial rituals.[68] For instance, Ionian *balsamarii* are found throughout the Greek world and were (presumably) employed in death rituals, as were the Naukratian *arybaloi*.[69] The earliest, 8th-century Villanovan bowl features Herakles' holding both of the horns of Acheloios in such a manner that it appears he is embarking on a voyage.[70] The same motif is found later, indicating a standing theme: On an early 5th-century Etruscan bronze[71] we find a man riding atop Acheloios, and on a similar gem[72] dating about 100 years later the same motif is present: a man grasping the horn of Acheloios as he is escorted to the afterlife. The same interpretation can be applied to the *arulas* of Lokris that feature Herakles wrestling Acheloios—on those pieces, the use of the scene on the walls of tombs indicates the liminal capacity of Acheloios

[65] See Licia Romano, La Corona del Dio. Nota sull' Iconografia Divina nel Protodinastico, *Vicino Oriente* XIV (Roma, 2008): 41-57; Süring, *The Horn-Motif in the Hebrew Bible and Related Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Iconography*, 141.
[66] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 1-3. But see Chapter 9 of this present work as well.
[67] Jean-René Jannot, Acheloos, le taureau androcéphale et les masques cornus dans l'Etrurie archaique, *Latomus* 33, 4 (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1974): 765-789. See also, Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 4.
[68] Ibid., 48-68, but particularly 50ff.
[69] Ibid., 58; M.R. Ciuccarelli, Due nuovi balsamari greco-orientali da Cerveteri, *Agoge. Atti della Scuola di specializzazione in archeologia*, Vol. IV-V (Pisa: University Press, 2010), 163; M.R. Ciuccarelli, Acheloo ctonio dalla Magna Grecia all'Etruria?, 126.
[70] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Figure 45, discussed on 40 and 44f.
[71] Isler, Acheloos, no. 238
[72] Ibid., no. 233.

(indeed, some were the tombs of children).[73] These traditions involving an aquatic dimension to the transmigration of the soul significantly predate even Etruscan culture, of course: In Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Cypriot, Italic, and Sardinian cultures from Neolithic times through to the Iron Age, the dead were buried with miniature boats indicating death as an aquatic voyage.[74] On one early Nuragic boat a man grasps the horns of a bull protome, as if carried off by the psychompompic deity of water.[75] Again, the same influences exhibited in Etruria were operative in Thales' Ionia, where Acheloios is attested in local art. For that matter, Acheloios is also depicted on coinage in such a way that he is associated with death: in some cases, a winged nymph crowns him from above, establishing him as the victor over death, and on others, he appears as a conveyor of souls to a (presumably) watery afterlife.[76] Although these coins also post-date Thales, they too reflect a much earlier tradition documented extensively elsewhere.[77] Consequently, Thales was not promoting something entirely new in advocating that *ὕδωρ* is the final principle of all things—the idea was already tacitly expressed in cultic activity concerning Acheloios, since Acheloios was quite literally responsible for the transmigration of the soul, and he was regularly incorporated into various death rituals in keeping with the historical tradition. For these reasons, we should doubt Detel and Panchenko, who claim the Milesian philosophers were the first to recognize this notion of 'final principle,' for we see that this too was contained in the mythological accounts.[78]

Ultimately, in terms of the modified threefold *ἀρχή*, there are good reasons to think Acheloios served as an essential mythological and cultic precursor. As a shapeshifting deity intimately related to birth, identity, growth, and abundance, he tacitly exhibits the characteristics of an originating principle that can become (or give rise to) all things. As a deity whose core logos incorporates a strength/sinew juxtaposition, who was responsible for ensuring proper upbringing, and with whom one assimilates to varying degrees, he occupies a commanding position, situated, as it were, as precursor to *ἀρχή* as 'governing.' As a chthonic deity positioned beneath the earth as the ultimate source of all water, including the sea, who is also often found in graves operating in a liminal capacity, he presages a delineated *ἀρχή* as underlying. Finally, Acheloios' role as a psychopomp and quite generally as a chthonic deity exhibits him as precursors to *ἀρχή* as final principle to which all things return. Thus, altogether, no deity serves as a better predecessor for all three meanings of *ἀρχή* combined, and Acheloios was the *only one* demonstrably in Miletos during Thales' life. Thus, we ask yet again: need we suppose Thales was in search of a candidate for the vacant position of *ἀρχή* when the idea was tacitly expressed in myth and religion? It is much more reasonable to assume he extrapolated from a prior mythological and cultic framework that involved water.

[73] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 66ff.
[74] Ibid., 39, note 103. For Sardinian sources, see A. Depalmas, *Le navicelle di bronzo della Sardegna nuragica* (Cagliari: Gasperini, 2005), 353-357.
[75] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 40; G. Lilliu, *Sculture della Sardegna Nuragica* (Nuoro: Ilisso, 2008), 493, no. 289.
[76] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 40-1, 66-8.
[77] Ibid., *passim*, but see especially chapter 1 for early history.
[78] Wolfgang Detel, Das Prinzip des Wassers bei Thales, in *Kulturgeschichte des Wassers*, ed. H. Boekme (Frankfurt am Main, 1988): 43-64; Pankchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 8.

The One and the Many

Concerning Acheloios as the Primary Source of Thales' Notion of the One among the Many

Before presenting the notion of the One and the Many as it relates to the particular details of Thales' worldview, it is important to demonstrate how the Acheloios tradition actually promotes abstraction conducive to philosophical propositions concerning a single principle that accounts for the manifold world of appearances. There are two primary ways in which this abstraction is induced: the notion that the rivers of the world are the 'sinews' of Acheloios, and the iconography of the man-faced bull itself. It will help to briefly review the case for local embodiments before we tie these concepts to Thales. In classical numismatics and, indeed, in the field of art history quite generally, the identity of the man-faced bull on Greek coinage and other art was a subject of fairly significant attention and debate.[79] Originally described as the Minotaur, the man-faced bull has been identified as several different figures: Neptune, Dionysos, an agricultural allegory, Acheloios, and local river gods, of which there are many: Palagkaios, Gelas, Traies, Sebethos, to name just a few.[80] While the evidence for the Minotaur, Neptune, and even Dionysios was not very persuasive, the evidence for Acheloios and the local river gods was.[81] On the one hand, we knew Acheloios was represented as a man-faced bull in Akarnania and on Greek pottery, and since he was identified with water itself, man-faced bulls on Greek coinage must all represent Acheloios.[82] Add to this the codification of iconography in classical times and the case is very persuasive, with Isler[83] being the leading contemporary voice of a theory first put forth in the late 18th century by Nicola Ignarra.[84] On the other hand, the case for local river gods was strong because in a few areas, the name of the river appears to be displayed right above the iconography, as if naming the creature outright.[85] This is true for the Gelas river of Gela, the Palagkaios river of Agyrion, and the Traenta river of Bruttium. The major insight in *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ* was that these inscriptions did not refute the theory that man-faced bulls are Acheloios, but in fact strengthened it, since the use of locative epithets was common in the ancient world and, in fact, on a contemporaneous coin from Tauromenion featuring Apollo Archagetas, only the epithet appears: ΑΡΞΑΓΕΤΑΣ––and yet the coin unquestionably features Apollo.[86] Thus, if the inscriptions above the man-faced bulls from Gela, Agyrion, and Bruttium are all locative epithets, we arrive at a unified theory in which man-faced bulls on Greek coinage are local embodiments of Acheloios, a theory perfectly consistent with the earlier version of the *Iliad*, the contemporaneous accounts of Acheloios, the Derveni and Oxyrhynchus papyri, and Ephorus.[87]

[79] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 6, for a comprehensive overview of the debate.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid., 88ff.
[83] H.P. Isler, *Acheloos: Eine Monographie* (Bern: Franke, 1970), *passim*.
[84] Ignarra, *De palaestra Neapolitana, passim*.
[85] So goes the argument of C. Weiss, in her book *Griechische Flussgottheiten in vorhellenistischer Zeit: Ikonographie und Bedeutung* (Würzburg: K. Triltsch, 1984).
[86] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, no. 56a-60. This coin features a man-faced bull on its reverse, Acheloios Amenanos.
[87] Ibid., 92ff.

This solution, grounded in Greek religious practices, also provides insight into the potential forces underlying the abstraction of the first philosophical contribution: *ὕδωρ* is the One among the Many is an insight that emerged from a previous understanding of Acheloios as the One among the *ποταμοί.* In other words, the abstraction from local rivers to the underlying unity of them—Acheloios—precipitated a more delineated *ἀρχή* in which *ὕδωρ* is the underlying unity of everything. Thus Ephorus informs us, 'Acheloios alone happens to be honored by all humankind, who refer to other rivers by their proper names, not by one or another common term, whereas they adopt the Acheloios' proper name as the common term.'[88] Secondly, the iconography that captures Acheloios in the local river is also conducive to an abstraction to the general god of all water. Hence, Socrates spots Acheloios 'judging by the figurines and statues,' while on the banks of the Ilisos.[89] In other words, Socrates knew it was Acheloios even though he was on the banks of a river of a different name.[90] There is therefore a One/Many juxtaposition in the iconography in the fact that it evokes the god of all water from the particular earthly manifestation, and this also likely precipitated the more refined One/Many distinction concerning divine water and the manifold world of appearances.[91] Ultimately, there is a doubling of abstraction inherent in the Acheloios tradition, from the relation of the many rivers to the one source and the many localized images to the one deity, and this seemingly enabled Thales to say, analogously from this original mythological and iconic substratum—but now without mythological qualification—that *ὕδωρ* was the One among the Many. In a word, Thales seems to have conflated the myth of Acheloios to account for all things and removed the proper name, which is essentially how Plato illustrates the situation as discussed in Chapter 12.

Concerning Individual Δαίμονες in Thales

But what does all this mean in terms of the nuances of Thales' worldview? The idea that the earliest philosophers were concerned with identifying a single principle to explain the manifold world of appearances was first clearly articulated by Aristotle.[92] Guthrie summarized the general problem of the One and the Many in relation to archaic Greek society in a work titled *The Greeks and Their Gods*.

> Sixth-century religious and philosophical thought...was dominated by one central problem, the problem of the One and the Many. This appeared in two forms, one referring to the macrocosm, the other to the microcosm. In its first form it was the problem of the Milesian natural philosophers, who asked, 'What is the relation between the manifold variety of the world in which we live and the one primary substance out of which, as we are convinced, it must in the first place have arisen?' In its second form it was the problem of the religious minds of the age. Their question was: 'What is the relation of each individual man to the divine, to which we feel we are akin, and how can we best realize and actualize the potential unity which underlies the two?'[93]

[88] Ephorus, *FGrH*, no. 70 fr. 20
[89] Plato, *Phaedrus* 230b-c.
[90] It is still irrevocably linked to the water source at the shrine, however.
[91] See Chapter 12 on the *Phaedrus* for full coverage. Briefly, Plato refers to an abstract 'judgment' based on the iconic images.
[92] See Chapter 3 of this present work for discussion.
[93] W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (Boston: Beacon, 1955), 316, as cited by Aryeh Finkelberg, On the Unity or Orphic and Milesian Thought, *Harvard Theological Review* 79:4 (1986): 321-35.

But is this division accurate? In his work, Finkelberg quotes this exact passage, but makes one important distinction—for him, Guthrie's dichotomy between the 'metaphysical/natural' and 'moral/Orphic' is erroneous. In fact, Finkelberg suggests that, instead of Thales focusing exclusively on understanding the machinations of an impersonal world (à la Seaford), he was essentially a speculative pantheist who, in advocating *ὕδωρ* was the *ἀρχή*, also claimed that the mind of God gave shape to the cosmos (as an extension of God himself, much like Cicero and others claimed in antiquity).[94] What is Finkelberg's justification for this more nuanced view and is it genuinely reflective of Thales' conceptual scheme?

Finkelberg's methodology is controversial. He accepts many ancient accounts as genuine where other scholars dismiss the account entirely because such accounts cannot be 'proven.'[95] For Finkelberg, the type of scrutiny such scholars employ (essentially a hermeneutic of doubt) makes little sense and, in fact, paints an inaccurate picture. Why should we throw away various ancient accounts simply because we cannot 'prove' they are reliable testimonies? Should every account be relegated to the field of 'reception' studies? Lack of conclusive proof of their accuracy does not *disprove* the accounts, after all, so, for Finkelberg (and I wholeheartedly agree), we ought to at least speculate and consider the worldview that emerges as a result of accepting some of them, for it may turn out to be correct.[96] This is precisely what Finkelberg does in his work, and in doing so reintegrates the ancient accounts about Thales that involve individual *δαίμονες*—which, when considered in light of the influence of Acheloios, turn out indeed to be correct.

Pseudo-Plutarch is the first ancient source for the division between individual *δαίμονες* and a cosmic god that Finkelberg adopts.[97] He (Pseudo-Plutarch) claims the following:

> The account of *daimons* and heroes should be pursued in parallel with the account concerning the gods. Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, and the Stoics hold that *daimons* are spiritual substances; that heroes are souls that are separated from bodies, and that good [souls] are good [heroes] and evil [souls] are evil [heroes].[98]

[94] He writes, 'If my interpretation is correct, Greek philosophy originated as a trend within the religious movement of the 6th century BCE, a century of great religious ferment and intense moral searching. This trend, which I would define as speculative pantheism, began to lose its religious pantheistic color as a result of changes in the mental climate in the first half of the 5th century. It was gradually transformed into speculation the motivation of which was not primarily religious and which properly can be called philosophical.' Finkelberg, On the Unity of Orphic and Milesian Thought, 334.

[95] Concerning Finkelberg's methodology, he argues that too often scholars dismiss as impossible positions that are not absolutely certain, and we therefore eliminate compelling evidence. He instead prefers to piece together the extant evidence and see the picture that emerges from the whole, which for him results in a soteriological pantheism for Thales. See Finkelberg, *Heraclitus and Thales' Conceptual Scheme: A Historical Study*, 1-17, for methodology.

[96] This is in direct contrast to the hermeneutic of doubt which is at the core of the Marxian enterprise of historical materialism.

[97] Pseudo-Plutarch, *Plactia philosophorum* 1.8.882b1-7 (Th 150).

[98] Translation McKirahan, *op.cit.*

He is followed by others, namely: Iohannes Stobeus,[99] Diogenes Laertius ('the cosmos is animate and full of *daimons*'),[100] Eusebius of Caesarea,[101] Pseudo-Galen,[102] and Hesychius(?).[103] Upon this basis Finkelberg characterizes Thales as a particularly thoughtful mystic,[104] in which there are individual souls and a world soul:

> In the Thaletan conceptual scheme the notion of the cosmic God as a determinate body formed the basis of the cosmic evolution as a vicissitude of the cosmic God; this conception served as a paradigm and cosmological background for the vicissitude of the soul, and as the basis of the part/whole relation of the soul to God.[105]

Here the individual δαίμων (*daímōn*) is thus incorporated as a microcosm of the world νοῦς (*noûs*): 'If Thales' conceived the world soul as *nous*, mind, he must have believed that our soul, a detached particle of the world's soul, was *nous*; it follows, contrary to what commentators hold, that Heraclitus was not the first to make the soul the center of cognitive and rational activities.'[106] Essentially, Finkelberg is pointing to Thales as the original thinker to hold these views because he is earlier and many ancient authors attribute such beliefs to him, yet Heraclitus gets the credit because his sources are more secure—which is unjustified and overly rigorous. Indeed, this inclusion of the individual δαίμων nicely complements Pinto's argument against unqualified panpsychism—we need not dismiss the panpsychist reading if we accept the world/individual juxtaposition.[107] A dead body can still reside in the omnipresent field of world ψυχή-νοῦς yet lack its δαίμων—indeed, δαίμων of course comes from δαίω, meaning 'to divide,' hence the idea that it is a portion of the larger whole. Thus, as Diogenes recounts, 'the cosmos is animate and full of *daimons,*'[108] not necessarily because it is full of them. In Finkelberg's view, we therefore have a cosmos that emerges from and returns to water, and this is somehow orchestrated by a divine intelligence, of which we are small parts.

But what of Thales' alleged belief that 'all things are full of gods'?[109] How precisely does '*θεῶν*' fit into this scheme? Finkelberg would conflate the *θεοί* and *δαίμονες* whereas I would not do that unequivocally in all cases, and here again the mythos of Acheloios sheds light on the matter. In the Acheloios tradition, even though Acheloios is present in all water, the local embodiment

[99] Iohannes Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 1.1.29b (Th 340). Cf. also Iohannes Philoponus, *In Artistotelis de anima libros commentaria* 15.188.12-18 (Th 443).
[100] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.27. Trans. R. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[101] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 15.43.2 (Th 275).
[102] Pseudo-Galen, *De historia philosophica* 36.1-5 (ed. Diels=Th 394).
[103] *Scholia in Platonem*, *Res publica* 600A1-10 (Th 578).
[104] Thus, for Finkelberg, Thales is no true philosopher, since the rationalism he employed, 'was the particular way in which the Ionians shaped the popular mystical outlook.'
[105] Finkleberg, *Heraclitus and Thales' Conceptual Scheme,* 276.
[106] Ibid., 245.
[107] For the conflation of *ψυχή* and *νοῦς*, see ibid.
[108] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.27. Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[109] Aristotle, *de anima*, 1.5.411a7 (Th 32=DK 11 A 22). O'Grady does not entirely believe this line is original to Thales, but her argument is not convincing, in the end claiming 'the idea of gods is contrary to Thales' materialism.' P. O'Grady, Thales of Miletus (c. 620 B.C.E.—c. 546 B.C.E.), in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Accessed January 7th, 2017. But she assumes that archaic Greek deities were conceptually divorced from a corporeal existence, a clear misunderstanding on her part (See especially Renehan, 'On the Greek Origins of the Concepts of Incorporeality and Immateriality,' 105-138.). She thinks this passage from Aristotle might be evidence Thales viewed the cosmos as full of 'living forces,' and the use of '*Θεῶν*' was at most a way of expressing his theory using customary language. In fact, as stated above, she goes so far as to suggest that Thales should have used Θεῖα to describe his intentions. (O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus*, 119).

is still in an important sense a different god.[110] So, for example, the aforementioned Acheloios Gelas is not exactly the same as Acheloios Amenanos (of Katane). Both have the same underlying substance (water) but appear in different places, with different physical characteristics, and different local epithets.[111] Furthermore, even the same river is always changing. This ancient vision is perhaps best summed up by Heraclitus, who said 'On those stepping into rivers staying the same other and other waters flow.'[112] This One/Many dynamic inherent in rivers (and among the river gods) is nonetheless much like the conceptual scheme advocated by Finkelberg in the realm of *νοῦς*, here applied to water: Just as the determinate bodies of rivers are local manifestations of Acheloios, so the individual soul is a vicissitude emerging from world *νοῦς*. Hence, we can say that Thales' idea that *ὕδωρ* is the ultimate principle and the idea that all things are full of gods is indeed reflective of the very strength/sinew relationship at the heart of the mythos of Acheloios—divine water, which is full of gods (literally), is the ultimate principle. Thus Pinto was on to something in pointing to *θεοί* as referring to water, and the mythos of Acheloios helps flush out what that truly means, namely, divine water is full of gods in the very same way that Acheloios is full of the *ποταμοί* (*potamoí*). Indeed, Pseudo-Plutarch was probably correct in his juxtaposition of *δαίμονες* and *θεοί*, not because they are equal, but because they are complementary, corresponding to (individual) soul and the gods inhabiting (divine) water. We will see in our reading of Pythagoras, Hippo, and Empedokles, as well as Sophokles and Plato, that a conflation between *δαίμων* and *θεοί* may occur, depending on the state of the soul, but this is not always the case.

Finkelberg's inclusion of inner *δαίμων* into Thales' worldview also makes sense since Thales was clearly concerned with self-knowledge, hence Plato claims he helped inscribe 'know thyself' at Delphi,[113] and he seemingly had much to say about morality,[114] indicating some concern with the state of the individual in relation to the divine (contra Guthrie). These accounts are overlooked and the emphasis put on Thaletan metaphysics as a result of Aristotelian influence, but it is rather unlikely Thales thought his own mind was just water or some kind of illusion, recognizing instead that it is somehow connected to the cosmic *νοῦς*, the governing force of the entire cosmos (hence his supposed belief that the gods know even our thoughts).[115] It makes much more sense, then, that Thales saw the world similar to how Finkleberg described it: the mind is the key characteristic of the individual and it is related to the whole much like the world of appearances is related to water, with the particulars emerging from the general.[116] Ultimately, given the similarity between the tradition of Acheloios and Thales' threefold *ἀρχή* outlined in the last section, it seems only reasonable to accept the accounts of *δαίμονες* because such accounts are consistent with the One/Many dynamic at the heart of the mythos of Acheloios *and* incorporate much of the ancient commentary for Thales, and thus provides us with a fairly reasonable philosophical worldview we can attribute to Thales: There is an all-pervasive, cosmic *νοῦς* that, in interacting with water (hence divine water), enables the

[110] See especially Parker, *On Greek Religion*, 70.
[111] We saw a similar play on plurality in the corresponding Hebrew tradition—when man-faced bulls were elevated for worship, symbolizing one Yahweh, the onlookers were told 'These are thy Gods/ Behold thy Gods' (Exodus 32:4; I Kings 12:28). See Waterman, Bull-Worship in Israel, 229-55.
[112] DK B12. Trans. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Cf. DK B 49a; DK B 91[a].
[113] Plato, *Protagoras* 343a-b (Th 20).
[114] Cf. e.g., Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 1:36-37.
[115] Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia* 7.2.8 (Th 96); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.14.96.4 (Th 207); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 1.36; *Gnomologium Vaticanum* 316 (Th 564).
[116] This conception will be confirmed in our reading of the *Phaedrus* in Chapter 12

transformation of water into the various things that make up the world, and in many cases the gods are instrumental in this process insofar as ὕδωρ—indeed, the whole cosmos—is full of gods. Moreover, just as all things in the world emerge from this primordial ὕδωρ, so individual souls (*δαίμονες)* emerge from the cosmic *νοῦς*. Finally, while everything emerges from and returns to ὕδωρ, and all *δαίμονες* emerge from and (presumably) return to the cosmic *νοῦς* (we'll explore later how *δαίμονες* might become *θεοί*), it wouldn't be accurate to say that everything *is* ὕδωρ, nor the *δαίμονες* utterly reducible to cosmic *νοῦς*, just as we would not say Acheloios Gelas is just Acheloios—there is plenty of room for genuine differentiation in the Thaletan world view for the world of appearances and individual souls to have authentic character and structure.

Concluding remarks

I'd like now to summarize the basic position that provisionally links Acheloios to Thales, covering the arguments presented in this chapter but also incorporating some of the key pieces of evidence presented throughout the book, in the hopes of painting a clear picture. There are good reasons to think that Acheloios was seen as the ultimate source of all water in Miletos during Thales' life: The earlier versions of Book 21 of the *Iliad* probably date to before the end of the 7th century, were later advocated by two prominent ethnic Ionians, and are consistent with the *Derveni Papyrus* and other important early sources; the Ionians were instrumental in the transfusion of man-faced bull iconography from the Near East into the Greek world; and, Asallúhi-Acheloios fits perfectly into the oriental-occidental chain and bridges the gap between Apsu and Thales. We also know that Acheloios was featured on vase fragments and in the form of *arybaloi* in Milesian colonies in the early 6th century, and even on electrum coins in Miletos itself in the mid 6th century. Furthermore, Thales might have been of Phoenician descent, and therefore raised in the traditions the Cypro-Phoenicians practiced for several generations, and if not Phoenician then Boeotian, and the case for an influence of Acheloios via that (also potentially Phoenician) lineage is equally persuasive.[117] More still, as early as Herodotus we have Thales associated with the regulation of rivers in 'well known' Greek accounts, hence an association with Acheloios, the ultimate symbol of regulated rivers in antiquity.[118] Aside from contextual evidence, we have also determined that Thales was influenced by the tradition of Acheloios when we look at his cosmology: Acheloios was a shapeshifting deity able to transform into (seemingly) anything, was associated with (and in some cases responsible for) the concepts of birth, identity, growth, and most importantly death, which are reflected in the characteristics of an originating, governing/underlying, and final principle; and, most importantly, the thinking behind the local embodiments of Acheloios is reflected in Thales' idea that (1) divine water as *ἀρχή* is the One among the Many and, (2) all things are full of gods.

[117] For discussion, see Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 77.
[118] Herodotus, *Historiae* 1.75 (Th 11).

Chapter 10

The Thaletan Tradition from Pythagoras to Empedokles

'Thales, in particular, was delighted with his presence'

Iamblichus[1]

At this point one might justifiably ask: If Acheloios was so influential in the development of Thales' philosophy, why has no one noticed this until now? The answer is not all that complicated, and two characters are noteworthy in particular: Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius. It is important to note that, by Aristotle's time, Acheloios the god had become thoroughly entangled with the Acheloios River of the ancient Akarnanian/Aetolian region, which, seemingly unbeknownst to Aristotle, was named after the god. The river in Akarnania that was hailed as the 'Achelous' in 4th-century Athens was originally called the Thoas, according to Strabo, and Homer actually placed the Acheloios River in Lydia.[2] In fact, scholars have identified the exact location of the original river that corresponds to the Homeric account, and it is only about 70 miles north of Miletos, near the Ionian/Aeolian border.[3] Add to this the fact that the competing tradition of Okeanos had apparently gained the upper hand by the 4th century BC (at least in Greece proper),[4] and Aristotle's ignorance is quite understandable. Essentially, just as Aristotle had little to go on when assessing Thales, he seemingly had little to no knowledge of the Acheloios tradition, and this is likely the main reason the Acheloios tradition has been overlooked in its influence on Thales, what with the Aristotelean account of the origin of philosophy having such a profound influence.

The second reason is the unjustified influence in modern scholarship of Diogenes Laertius' division between the Ionian and Italian schools of philosophy,[5] which disconnected Thales' philosophy from that of Pythagoras, Hippo, and Empedokles, three thinkers who exhibit strong indications of Thaletan-Acheloian influence upon examination. Because of Diogenes' division, most modern commentators focus on the philosophical relationship between Thales and Anaximander, who is often hailed as Thales' pupil, and Thales as a result becomes categorized as a 'natural philosopher,' to the exclusion of any philosophical influence on Pythagoras and his school. Diogenes makes his division clear: 'But philosophy has two origins, one that

[1] Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 2.11-12. Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[2] Strabo, *Geographica* 10.2; Homer, *Iliad* 24.616. Many rivers had the name 'Acheloios' in antiquity, indicating the names stemmed from the deity.
[3] Henry John Van-Lennep, *Travels in Little-known Parts of Asia Minor, with Illustrations of Biblical Literature and Researches in Archaeology,* Volume 2 (London: John Murray, 1870), 300ff.
[4] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 33, note 59.
[5] Maria Michaela Sassi presents an excellent overview of this division between Ionian and Italic schools. See M. Sassi, Ionian Philosophy and Italic Philosophy: From Diogenes Laertius to Diels, in *The Presocratics from the Latin Middle Ages to Hermann Diels*, Akten der 9, Tagung der Karl und Gertrud Abel-Stiftung vom 5.-7. Oktober 2006 in München, edited by Oliver Primavesi and Katharina Luchner (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011), 19-44. For a truly interesting look at geometry and metaphysics passed down from Thales to Pythagoras and eventually Plato, see Robert Hahn, *The Metaphysics of the Pythagorean Theorem: Thales, Pythagoras, Engineering, and the Construction of Right Triangles* (New York: SUNY, 2018).

dates back to Anaximander, the other to Pythagoras. Anaximander was a student of Thales; Pythagoras studied with Pherecydes.'[6] Despite his testimony, a quick look at the ancient literature reveals an altogether different story concerning Thales' descendants (and, hence, his sphere of influence). Of all the 592 ancient passages that concern Thales, 13.8% of them mention Pythagoras—the exact same percentage as Anaximander. There is therefore sufficient reason to explore the relationship of Thales to the 'Italian' school of philosophy, beyond his affiliation with mathematics, and it is here that we will find the cult of Acheloios' influence on later thinkers, an influence originally filtered through Thales.

This chapter examines Pythagoras, Hippo, and Empedokles with the specific goal of highlighting a chain of influence of the Thaletan-Acheloian tradition in the so-called Italian school. The evidence here is somewhat fragmentary, but when assembled altogether and supported by the previous chapter concerning Acheloios and Thales and subsequent chapters on Sophokles and Plato, such evidence indicates it is high time we blur Diogenes' line, for Thales was just as influential on Pythagoras as Anaximander—and perhaps we even see more of Thales in Pythagoras than in his own 'Ionian school.'[7]

Pythagoras

As indicated above, there is persuasive evidence that Thales influenced Pythagoras, who hailed from nearby Samos (just over 20 miles north-west). Cicero is actually the first to tie the specific teachings of the two together. He claims that Pythagoras recommended the construction of religious shrines because 'piety and religious feeling are in our minds when we perform religious rites,' and connects this to Thales' idea that 'all things are full of gods,' insofar as, if people believe 'everything they see is full of gods...everyone would be more pure, as happens when they are in the holiest shrines.'[8] Pseudo-Plutarch also associates the two, claiming they shared followers,[9] and Eusebius[10] and Iohannes Stobaeus[11] say the same thing. The connection is further strengthened by Iamblichus' *Vitae Pythagorae*, where we learn that Thales greatly admired Pythagoras and seemingly taught him a great deal. I cite the most important parts of the fragment below.

Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 2.11-12 (ed. V. Albrecht):

> With him he crossed over to Miletos to see Pherecydes, Anaximander the natural philosopher, and Thales. He [Pythagoras] met with each in turn and conducted himself so well that everyone liked him and admired his nature and invited him to join in their discussions, Thales in particular was delighted with his presence...After teaching him *as much as he could*, blaming his old age and weakness, he encouraged him to sail across to Egypt and especially to converse with the priests at Memphis and Diospolis, since he himself had been educated by them. (emphasis added)

[6] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.13ff.
[7] For an overview of Diogenes' handiwork, see Glenn W. Most, Diogenes Laertius and Nietzsche, in *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers,* 619-622.
[8] Cicero, *De legibus* 2.26 (Th 76).
[9] Pseudo-Plutarch, *Placita Philsophorum* 1.9.882C3-5; 1.16.883D4-6 (ed. Lachenaud=Th 151).
[10] Eusebius, *Preaeparatio Evangelica* 15.44.2 (ed. DesPlaces=Th 276).
[11] Iohannes Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 1.11.3 and 1.14.1i (ed. Wachsmuth/Hense=Th 346 and Th 348).

Iamblichus offers us a clear, unambiguous account that directly links Thales to Pythagoras and positions their relationship above that of Pherecydes and Anaximander, and prompts one to question again why the Thales-Pythagoras relationship is so largely overlooked in modern commentary. It is interesting, too, that Anaximander, one of the 'Milesian school' and allegedly Thales' pupil, is differentiated from Thales as being a 'natural' philosopher (thus Thales by extension is not a 'natural' philosopher).

The next quote is all the more interesting, for it states that the moral principles of Pythagoras stem from Thales.

Iamblichus *Vita Pythagorae*, 3.13-14 (ed. V. Albrecht=Th 250):

> He [Pythagoras] was helped by Thales in other things and particularly in not wasting time. For this reason he renounced wine, meat and gluttony most of all, limiting himself to light and easily digestible food, and as a result he needed little sleep and was *alert and clean in soul* and enjoyed the most strict and unimpaired health of his body...Delighted at the advice of his teacher Thales he crossed without delay with some Egyptian ferrymen who most conveniently had anchored just then on the shore beneath the Phoenician Mount Carmel, where Pythagoras used to spend much time at the sanctuary. [12]

Here we have a reinforcement of the teacher-student relationship between Thales and Pythagoras that is important for two reasons: (1) it states that the moral precepts for which Pythagoras was especially known[13] stem in large part from Thales' initial teachings, hence Iamblicus' use of the phrase 'for this reason,' and, (2) it connects these teachings to Pythagoras' 'alert and clean' soul, indicating Thales instructed Pythagoras concerning the soul. The implication therefore extends beyond mere physical health—since we know Thales was concerned with the soul as part of a larger, cosmic *voῦς*, and that by following his teacher's instruction Pythagoras had a clean and alert soul, Thales' lessons to Pythagoras extended beyond gastronomy to a more spiritual dimension. As a result, Cicero's comparison, above, seems justified.

The more esoteric side to these teachings might be further elucidated through Aristotle. In a collection of his fragments, [14] we witness a rather clear affiliation with the Acheloios tradition. The most comprehensive comes from Apollonius Paradoxographus.

Apollonius Paradoxographus, *Mirabilia*, 6:

> He [Aristotle] also says that Pythagoras foretold to the Pythagoreans the coming political strife; by reason of which he departed to Metapontum unobserved by anyone, and while he was crossing the river Cosas he, with others, heard the river say, with a

[12] As mentioned earlier, the word *προφήταις* (*prophḗtais*) appears in the account of Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.14.62.1-63.2 (Th 202) and Eusebius of Caesaria, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.4.17-18 (Th 262). This term might indicate the very same prophets who busied themselves with Acheloios, who is connected in various contexts with oracular activity for several generations and across the Mediterranean. For instance, Acheloios is paired with knucklebones at Cyprus, and in Southern Italy, in the tombs at the aforementioned Lokri, astragaloi were utterly pervasive (numbering in the hundreds). For discussion, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 66ff.
[13] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
[14] See J.A. Philip, Aristotle's Monograph on the Pythagoreans, in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*,' Vol. 94 (1963): 185-198.

> voice beyond human strength, 'Pythagoras, hail!'; at which those present were greatly alarmed.[15]

There are other, similar testimonies concerning Pythagoras' communication with rivers.[16] I bring these up, naturally, because they associate Pythagoras with river divinities, and thus ultimately the 'strength' of rivers, Acheloios, especially since there is extensive evidence of cultic worship of Acheloios in Greek and Etruscan contexts in Southern Italy and Sicily during the very time Pythagoras was there.[17] For example, at Rhegion a silver stater was issued c. 510 BC and features Acheloios Apsias;[18] at nearby Lokri we find the Herakles-Acheloios *arulas* dating to about 525 BC;[19] and, at Loas (c. 480 BC), we find Acheloios Laos on both sides of the silver stater, triobol, obol, and hemiobol.[20] In fact, we'll see essentially this same phenomenon of an individual *δαίμων* communicating with a river in Plato's *Phaedrus*, a dialogue that I will show is irrevocably connected to Thales' encounter with the Acheloios tradition.[21] In any case, the fact that our earliest accounts of Pythagoras reflect this Acheloian tradition is important evidence for Pythagoreanism in its relation to the arcane knowledge associated with *ποταμοί* of the ancient world. This is not merely a whimsical tale, it helps characterize Pythagoras as having an affiliation with river god lore and hence, the general mythos of Acheloios.

More importantly, however, is the notion of *δαίμονες,* which were reincorporated into the Thaletan conceptual scheme by Finkelberg. Numerous sources document Pythagoras' concern with metempsychosis[22]—or the transmigration of the soul. Heraclides tells us, for instance, that Pythagoras had former lives as the following people: Aethalides, Euphorbus, Hermotimus, and finally Pyrrhus.[23] But where did Pythagoras get this idea? As Porphyry reports:

> He [Pythagoras] taught that the soul was immortal and that after death it transmigrated into other animated bodies. After certain specified periods, the same events occur again; that nothing was entirely new; that all animated beings were kin, and should be considered as belonging to one great family.[24]

The language concerning kin and families is clearly reminiscent of the Thaletan scheme in which, as Finkelberg describes it, individual souls (there conflated with *δαίμονες*) are portions of a cosmic soul. Usually, folks attribute this belief of Pythagoras to Orphism—and that may indeed be true—but we should not overlook the influence of Thales, who likewise seems to

[15] Trans. Sir David Ross, *The Works of Aristotle*, *Volume XII: Select Fragments* (Oxford, 1952), 134.
[16] Aelian, *Claudii Aeliani varia historia* 2.6 and 4.17 (ed. Dilts); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum,* 8.11 (here the river is the Nessus).
[17] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*: Sinews of Acheloios, 48-68.
[18] Cf. Rutter, *HN Italy*[3]*,* 187, no. 2468.
[19] V. Origlia, Le arule a Locri Epifiziri, in *Locri Epifiziri III. Cultura materiale e vita quotidiana*, edited by M. Barra Bagnasco (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1989), 135-144.
[20] Rutter, *HN Italy*[3]*,* 177, no. 2275-2281.
[21] See Chapter 12, below.
[22] Xenophanes, *Fr.* 7; Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae,* 19; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, 8.4-5. For Pythagoras and the notion of metempsychosis, see C.A. Huffman, The Pythagorean Conception of the Soul from Pythagoras to Philolaus, in *Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy*, edited by D. Frede and B. Reis (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009): 21–44; C.A. Huffman, The Peripatetics on the Pythagoreans, in *A History of Pythagoreanism*, edited by C.A. Huffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 281ff.
[23] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 8.4-5.
[24] Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae,* 19.

Figure 36a: Mask of Acheloios, from an underground Neopythagorean basilica at Porta Maggiore, first century BC. Author's drawing of the stucco relief *in situ.*

Figure 36b: Two masks of Acheloios surrounding centaur confronting man, from an underground Neopythagorean basilica at Porta Maggiore, first century BC. Author's drawing of the stucco relief *in situ.*

have had some Orphic influence.[25] The most reasonable explanation is that Pythagoras' views on metempsychosis stem from his teacher's instruction concerning individual δαίμονες, which themselves had an Orphic dimension, since we know Thales instructed Pythagoras concerning the soul.

[25] To judge from the Orphic connections at Milesian colonies (see Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 30) and the connection of Orphism to Dodona, discussed in the next chapter with reference to Acheloios.

Figure 37a: Winged nymph, from an underground Neopythagorean basilica at Porta Maggiore, first century BC. Author's drawing of the stucco relief *in situ.*

Figure 37b: Psyche(?) carries Eros(?) who drinks water from a pitcher, from an underground Neopythagorean basilica at Porta Maggiore, first century BC. Author's drawing of the stucco relief *in situ.*

With these connections in mind there are some non-literary pieces of evidence concerning Acheloios directly related to Pythagoras. The first piece of evidence consists of a Neo-Pythagorean underground basilica from the 1st century AD that features masks of Acheloios (Figure 36a and Figure 36b) and depictions of his daughters, the sirens and nymphs (Figure 37a), appearing throughout. Though significantly later than Pythagoras himself, the secret, chthonic temple significantly strengthens the connection between the cult of Acheloios and Pythagoreanism.[26] More, it appears that some of the depictions in the basilica, for instance the man fighting the centaur surrounded on both sides by Acheloios masks (Figure 36b), might be an allusion to the story told in the *Trachiniae,* discussed in the next chapter. Finally, at the ceiling, we have a winged figure carrying another figure who drinks from a pitcher of water (Figure 37b)—in my estimation, this could represent Psyche and Eros, similar to the Etruscan mirrors (Figure 32), representing two figures that play a fundamental role in Plato's engagement with Thales and the cult of Acheloios discussed in Chapter 12. There we'll learn about the distinct aquatic dimension of the interplay between Psyche and Eros that appears to be exhibited in this Pythagorean cultic depiction.[27]

The second piece of evidence is an inscription dating from the third to first century BC that directly associates the name Acheloios with Pythagoras: *Ἀχελώιος Πυθαγόρεω* (*Achelṓios Pythagóreō*).[28] This appears among many other names in a list, and situates the individual within

[26] Porta Maggiore Basilica, for the initial archaeological report, which dates the site to the 1st century BC See Jérôme Carcopino, *La basilique pythagoricienne de la Porte Majeure*. Etudes romaines. Paris: l'Artisan du livre, 1927).
[27] Cf. also Figure 43b, a Roman Imperial mosaic from Zeugma, featuring Psyche and Eros seated on a couch, surrounded by a border full of vegetation and cornucopias and two heads of Acheloios.
[28] *IG X*, Perinthos-Herakleia 61.

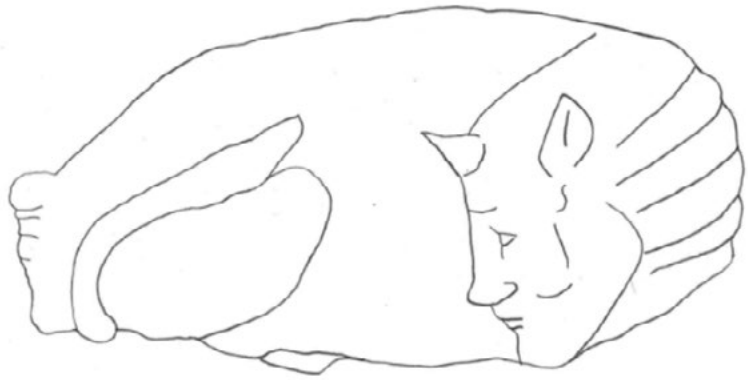

Figure 38: Amber Acheloios pendant, c. late sixth, early fifth century BC, found in Southern Italy. Author's drawing of an item in the British Museum. Inv. 1856,1226.1442.

the *deme* Boreis (the Boreis *deme* has an old Milesian origin).[29] One appealing way to interpret the name is that it is reflective of the general Acheloios-Pythagorean association—Someone of Milesian heritage chose this name, presumably because there is an association between Acheloios and Pythagoras, and that meant something to this particular *deme* from Miletos. The alternative would be that the person choosing the name was completely unaware of the connection, which I find unlikely. The inscription itself is located in an area in ancient Thrace called Perinthos-Herakleia, and ultimately indicates, to me, that there is some dimension of Acheloios worship in Pythagoreanism, indicated by the naming of a child *Ἀχελώιος Πυθαγόρεω*.

The final piece of evidence I consider a didactic device used by Pythagoras or a close follower and is certainly reminiscent of the earlier teachings of Thales (Figure 38).[30] It is an amber relief sculpture in the shape of Acheloios and dates to the late sixth, early fifth century BC, therefore during Pythagoras' life. The attribution as didactic device stems from Aristotle and Hippias (via Diogenes), both of whom indicate Thales used amber in such a way:

Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 1.24:

> Aristotle and Hippias say that he [Thales] attributed souls even to inanimate objects, arguing from the magnet and from amber.[31]

The amber pendant dates to the very time Pythagoras was in Southern Italy, was found in the general area he inhabited toward the end of his life (just north of Metapontion), and has a tie to his teacher Thales, both in form and substance.[32] In fact, in terms of the soul, the nearby *arulas*

[29] Gorman, *Miletos, the Ornament of Ionia*, 38-9.
[30] BMC 1856,1226.1442
[31] Trans. Mensch, *op.cit.*
[32] 'Materiality' is a budding focus in art history, in which the belief is held that the materials used convey meaning, in this case amber selected especially for its didactic function. For a collection of papers on the topic, see S. Lepinksi and S. McFadden, *Beyond Iconography: Materials, Methods, and Meaning in Ancient Surface Decoration. Selected Papers on Ancient Art and Architecture,* Book 1 (Boston, MA: Archaeological Institute of America, 2015). For early use of sacred clay for bull-man votive objects, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 7-8.

at Lokris also indicate a clear connection between Acheloios and metempsychosis, the latter of which, as we saw, was of great interest to Pythagoras.[33] When seen in the overall context of Acheloios as psychopomp, the amber pendant is remarkable since it ties the Milesian tradition to the Pythagorean tradition. In other words, given the context and what we know concerning Thales' use of amber, it is difficult not to connect this object to the Thaletan-Pythagorean tradition and the concern for the soul as a portion of the cosmic *νοῦς*.

Ultimately, there is evidence of the following: (1) Thales was very fond of Pythagoras and instructed him, especially concerning moral activities and hence, the soul, which Pythagoras is most known for in early accounts; (2) Thales and Pythagoras were concerned with the soul as a portion of a larger soul or family of kindred souls, respectively; (3) Pythagoras was associated with Acheloios by the later tradition, possibly indicated by the Perinthos-Herakleia inscription, surely at Porta Maggiore Basilica, and also via the accounts of rivers (the 'sinews of Acheloios') speaking to Pythagoras, and, (4) the amber Acheloios was likely used as a didactic device—perhaps by Pythagoras himself, whose own father was a gem engraver[34]—to demonstrate the teachings of the Pythagorean mystery cult, which was seemingly reflective of a tradition filtered through Thales.

Hippo

Hippo was probably a native of Italy and lived in the mid to late 5th century BC, though precisely where is disputed and there might have been more than one philosopher in the general time period that went by that name.[35] In this section I am referring to the Hippo known mostly from Aristotle's account in *De anima* and the *Metaphysics*, reproduced below. First, in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle mentions Hippo in the context of the earliest philosophers, but does not classify him in the same category.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 984a:

> As for Hippo, one would not consider him worthy of being included among these thinkers because of the shallowness of his thought.[36]

Later, in *De anima*, we learn precisely the content of his philosophy.

Aristotle, *De anima* 405b:

> Among the cruder thinkers, some have even declared that it [soul] is water, such as Hippo. (They seem to have been persuaded of this on the basis of the generative seed of all things being wet.)[37]

[33] Huffman, The Pythagorean Conception of the Soul from Pythagoras to Philolaus, 21–44; Huffman, The Peripatetics on the Pythagoreans, 281ff.
[34] Nancy Demand, Pythagoras, Son of Mnesarchos, *Phronesis* 18, 2 (1973): 91-96. Some have suggested, based on the family trade, that Pythagoras was responsible for the introduction of incuse coinage in Southern Italy. See Duc De Luynes, *Nouvelles Annales de l'Institut Arch. De Rome* (1836), 388ff.
[35] For a brief overview with extensive sources, see Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 209, note 62.
[36] Trans. Apostle, *op.cit.*
[37] Trans. Shiffman, *op cit.*

These passages are interesting for three reasons. First, we have attributed to Hippo the idea that the soul is aquatic, which implies that he too saw water as the *ἀρχή*, though in this sense as a truly constitutive cause. Second, Aristotle clearly says 'They seem to have been persuaded...,' indicating that this aquatic view was relatively widespread, which makes sense for a South Italian thinker in the mid to late fifth century, when cults of Acheloios were widespread, particularly at Rhegion and Metapontion,[38] two places from which Hippo is said to have hailed.[39] Indeed, the idea of being 'persuaded' indicates it was Thales' original remarks about *ὕδωρ* that influenced these thinkers—seemingly taking it further than him. Finally, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the *De anima* passage casts further doubt on (Hegelian) Aristotle's classification of Thales in the *Metaphysics* as proposing a constitutive, material cause—if Thales had suggested such a version of the *ἀρχή*, wouldn't he too be classified with Hippo, for the shallowness of his thought in reducing the soul (and all things) to water?[40] Ultimately, then, from what we learn about Hippo from Aristotle it is clear that some influence extends from Thales and most certainly the Acheloian tradition, though as expected the teachings were modified.[41]

To push the connection further, Walter Burkert, following Guthrie,[42] claims Hippo was probably a Pythagorean.[43] He cites specifically Aristoxenus (via Iamblichus) as having characterized Hippo this way.[44] In terms of the philosophical content that might link the two, Gurthie cites Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 38.10 (ed. Hayduck), in which he claims 'Opportunity, on the other hand, they said was 7, because in nature the times of fulfillment with respect to birth and maturity go in sevens.' This Guthrie connects with Hippo, about whom Censorinus said: 'Hippo of Metapontum stated that a birth could occur between the seventh and the tenth month, since by the seventh month the fetus is mature enough to survive.'[45] Here Hippo's recourse to numbers as indicative of major stages in the life of a human is indicative of a Pythagorean view à la Aristotle's description.[46] On the other hand, Zeller characterized Hippo as Ionian.[47] Zeller's rationale was based on the idea that, since Hippo's philosophy appears to be similar to Thales and Anaximander (as an atomized water), he therefore belongs in their school.[48] But both are true, in a sense, since Pythagoreanism was in large part influenced by the Milesian Thales, hence Hippo's similar views to Thales make him 'Ionian,' yet his contact with Pythagoreans in Italy and interest in number make him Pythagorean. In a similar way, *Ἀχελώιος Πυθαγόρεω* was a name for a member of an Ionian *deme*, but this otherwise unknown figure, it seems to me, was also a Pythagorean.

[38] At Rhegion, recall the coin mentioned above featuring, presumably, Acheloios Apsias, and the nearby arulas at Lokri featuring Herakles wrestling Acheloios. At Metapontion, we have the Acheloios stater, which depicts him with a man's body and bearded and horned head, and the smaller silver diobols which feature the head and neck of Acheloios as a man-faced bull, all dating to c. 440-430 BC. See Rutter, *HN Italy*[3], 132, no. 1491-1492.
[39] Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 209, note 62.
[40] Cf. Barney, Historic and Dialectic in *Metaphysics* A3, 85-88.
[41] Ibid., 86, especially note 41.
[42] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy.* Volume 1*: The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans,* 303.
[43] Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 209, note 62.
[44] Fr. 21 (ed. Wehrli)=Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 267.
[45] Trans. Curtis Clay, private correspondence, of Censorinus (DK 38 A 16): '*Hippon Metapontinus a septimo ad decimum mensem nasci posse aestimavit; nam septimo partum iam esse maturum...*'
[46] Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy,* 303; Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism,* 290, n. 62.
[47] E. Zeller, *A history of Greek philosophy from the earliest period to the time of Socrates,* Volume 1, translated by Sarah Alleyne (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1881), 280-282.
[48] Ibid.

There is also record of an epitaph that might help understand Hippo's thought and shed further light on his connection to Pythagoras and Thales.

Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Fr. 2:

> *Ἵππωνος τόδε σῆμα, τὸν ἀθανατοῖσι θεοῖσιν*
> *ἶσον ἐποίησεν Μοῖρα καταφθίμενον*[49]
>
> Behold the tomb of Hippo, whom in death,
> Fate made an equal of the immortal gods.[50]

Some have used this to justify ancient accounts of Hippo as an atheist, claiming 'the gods are nothing; just as the dead man is.'[51] In this sense, Fate has it that Hippo is dead, presumably just like the gods whom he allegedly claimed were non-existent. Others, however, see this as self-deification in the manner of Pythagoras and Empedokles,[52] which makes perfect sense in the tradition of Acheloios (i.e. assimilation) and the Thaletan belief in individual *δαίμονες* as vicissitudes of the cosmic deity. Given Hippo's belief in an aquatic soul and his identification by some as a Pythagorean (hence occupied with notions of metempsychosis and number), I find the latter interpretation far more appealing.[53] Hippo, in other words, has returned to his ultimate source, water.

In the final analysis, with Hippo we have additional evidence of the influence of Thales in Italy and in particular on the Pythagorean school. On the one hand, the Thaletan influence is clear from the positioning of water as the ultimate principle. On the other hand, Hippo was related to Pythagoras specifically concerning his views on number. It therefore makes terrific sense that the next in line in the Thaletan-Pythagorean chain could be construed as either Ionian or Pythagorean, since his philosophy reflected influences from both thinkers and, of course, Acheloios. So yet again we have good evidence to support blurring Diogenes' line between the Ionians and Italians.

Empedokles

The influence of Pythagoras on Empedokles (495-444 BC) is well established,[54] yet the connection of Empedokles to Thales is rarely mentioned. While only 4% of the extant ancient commentary on Thales mentions Empedokles, the vast majority lump them together as natural philosophers or, alternatively, among the Seven Sages, connecting them for a specific type of worldview that was markedly different from other thinkers of the time. Indeed, some scholars consider Empedokles a 'neo-Ionian,' precisely because of the more systematic and naturalistic dimension to his philosophy.[55] I think there is some truth to that expression, but

[49] Theodor Bergk, *Poetae lyrici graeci*, XV, 431 (as cited by Burnet).
[50] Trans. G.W. Butterworth, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge, MA: Loeb, 1919).
[51] Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism,* 290, n. 62.
[52] For discussion, see Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism,* 290, n. 62. For Pythagoras as semi-divine, see e.g., Apollonius Paradoxographus, *Mirabilia* 6; Aelian, *Claudii Aeliani varia hiistoria* 2.26; Iamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae* 31. For Empedokles worshipped as a god, see Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 8.70ff.
[53] Leonid Zhmud also recently catalogued Hippo as Pythagorean. Leonid Zhmud, *Pythagoras and the Early Pythagoreans,* translated by Kevin Windle and Rosh Ireland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 126–128.
[54] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 8.50ff.
[55] Daniel W. Graham, Empedocles and Anaxagoras: Responses to Parmenides, in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek*

it can be pursued much further back to Thales and the tradition of Acheloios, at least to the extent that Empedokles incorporated theories concerning metempsychosis and *δαίμονες*. It is important to note, however, that the overall worldview of Empedokles is contrasted with that of Thales throughout the *Phaedrus* and *Theaetetus* (explored in Chapter 12), in which case Empedokles is linked with the Protagorean school of 'flux' but Thales is considered one of Socrates' 'band,' indeed the leading figure among those who believe in real, eternal absolutes. Nonetheless, and whether or not Plato's characterization of Empedokles is perfectly accurate, careful observation reveals certain levels of influence, particularly through the mediation of Pythagoras, even though Empedokles appears to have departed from his teacher's teacher in certain respects.[56]

There is essentially no dispute in contemporary scholarship that Empedokles was influenced by Pythagoras, so we need not devote much space to the evidence.[57] Like his predecessors, Empedokles operated under a strict moral code, but unlike Thales and Pythagoras allegedly authored two books, *On Nature* and *Purifications*.[58] In *Purifications* he prohibited the eating of beans, and this very same peculiar prohibition has been attached to the Pythagoreans.[59] This is an important concept, because Empedokles seems to link, at least to some degree, the transmigration of the soul to bodily purification—seemingly the eating of flesh (and beans) is of the realm of Strife, since 'the greatest defilement among men—to bereave of life and eat noble limbs.'[60] In Fragment 107 (115) ed. Wright, we learn the following:

> There is a decree of necessity, ratified long ago by gods, eternal and sealed by broad oaths, that whenever one in error, from fear, (defiles) his own limbs, having by his error made false the oath he swore—daimons to whom life long-lasting is apportioned—he wanders from the blessed ones for three times countless years, being born throughout the time as all kinds of mortal forms, exchanging one hard way of life for another...I too am now one of these, an exile from the gods and a wanderer, having put my trust in raving strife.

Philosophy, 159; J.Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* 2nd edition (London, 1982), Chapter 15. As Graham comments, 'the term aptly allows us to class philosophers of Italy and Sicily, such as Philolaus and Empedocles, with later philosophers from Ionia such as Anaxagoras.' Graham, Empedocles and Anaxagoras: Responses to Parmenides, 177, note 1.

[56] One late author, perhaps the 9th Century Pseudo-Ammonius but potentially a 19th century invention, actually links both of their philosophies with recourse to a cosmic deity, but, unfortunately, we cannot take it as reliable testimony, since none of the extant fragments of Empedokles posit a unified, cosmic *νοῦς*: 'As for the ancients like Thales and Empedocles, they said that the first will, i.e., the will of the Creator, in relation to the Creator is that which is creating, and, in relation to that which is created, is that which has been created.' Pseudo-Ammonius, Kitāb Amūniyūs fī ārā'I l-falāsifa 24.29 (74.8)=Th 486.

[57] For the relevant fragments and commentary, see M.R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), 14, 86, 161, 180, 183, 209, 233, 243, 259, 262, 275, 289, 293, 295. Some ancient sources state outright that Empedokles was a student of Pythagoras. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 8.54: 'Timaeus, in the ninth book of his Histories, says that Empedocles was a student of Pythagoras, adding that after being convicted of plagiarizing the man's discourses he was excluded, like Plato, from taking part in the school's discussions. He adds that Empedokles himself mentions Pythagoras when he says, 'Among them was a man of rare knowledge, Who possessed an immense wealth of wisdom.' Trans. Mensch, *op.cit*.

[58] Ibid., 8.54.

[59] For the fragments of Empedokles, see Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*.

[60] Empedokles, *Purifications* 118 (128) (ed. Wright). Cf. *Purifications* 120 (139), 'Alas that the pitiless day did not destroy me first, before I devised for my lips the cruel deed of eating flesh.'

Empedokles is thus in a predicament: he seems to have broken some oath and is now cast into the realm of *δαίμονες* as an exile from the gods.[61] In Wright's reading, the 'gods' in line 1 of Fr. 107 are conflated with *δαίμονες*, who are mentioned in other fragments as coming among men and becoming gods (cf. Fr. 132(146): 'they arise as gods, highest in honor'). But I think a perfect equivalence is unwise. It seems more to the point that an individual god can become a *δαίμων,* an unwelcome development due to Strife, but re-assume the form of a god through Love, in which case we have *ὁ εὐδαιμονέστατος θεός* (*ho eudaimonéstatos theós*, Wright's articulation of the concept—presumably the same as being a 'blessed one').[62] In this reading, we find remarkable similarity to the Thaletan view captured in Pseudo-Plutarch's comments about gods, souls, and *δαίμονες*. Recall that in that account we must consider the role of *δαίμονες* and gods in parallel: '*daimons* are spiritual substances...good [souls] are good [heroes] and evil [souls] are evil [heroes].'[63] Inferring from the two passages of Thales and Empedokles, we might suppose that in the Thaletan conceptual scheme a *δαίμων* might become a god, presumably based on good behavior, which is noticeably similar to Empedokles' view. This would make sense for Thales based on the Acheloian tradition and its role of assimilation in cultic practices, but more importantly, is reminiscent of Pythagoras' view, 'that all animated beings were kin, and should be considered as belonging to one great family'[64] (which, again, appears to stem from Thales). Indeed, Plato uses the phrase *θεῶν γένος εὐδαιμόνων*[65] in reference to certain souls that are the 'blessed ones,' and the use of *γένος* (*genōs*) indicates a familial dimension. In all three accounts there is some affiliation among gods and *δαίμονες* and that is evidence of influence since Thales was the original teacher. And so I ask: Is it unreasonable to suppose that some element of Empedokles' ideas about *δαίμονες,* gods, and reincarnation were influenced by his teacher's teacher? At the very least it is fair to attribute to Thales the seed of Empedokles' idea concerning *δαίμονες*.

Turning to *On Physics*, the interplay of Love and Strife as the major orchestrators of the unfolding of the cosmos are reminiscent of a cosmic *νοῦς* responsible for giving shape to the world, albeit not a direct copying:

Empedokles, *Physics* 16(26) ed. Wright:

> They prevail in turn as the cycle moves round, and decrease into each other and increase in appointed succession. For they are the only real things, and as they run through one another they become men and the kinds of other animals, at one time coming into one order through love, at another again being borne away from each other by strife's hate, until they come together into the whole and are subdued.

As two forces that facilitate the emergence of all things from a single, ideal point and ultimately the return to it, the influence of the Thaletan comic *νοῦς* seems apt. In *On Physics* 22 (29/28) (ed. Wright) we learn 'For two branches do not spring from his back, he has no feet, no swift knees, no organs of reproduction, but he is equal to himself in every direction, without any beginning or end, a rounded sphere, rejoicing in encircling stillness.' Here we have the perfect

[61] Empedokles, Fr. 108 (ed. Wright): 'For before now I have been at some time boy and girl, bush, bird, and a mute fish in the sea.'
[62] Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 31.
[63] Pseudo-Plutarch, *Plactia philosophorum* 1.8.882b1-7 (Th 150).
[64] Porphyry, *Vita Pythagorae,* 19.
[65] Cf. *Phaedrus* 247a.

harmony achieved when Love reigns supreme, and so the collection of *δαίμονες, εὐδαίμονες* as gods, become one whole reminiscent of the cosmic *νοῦς* and the vicissitudes of this *νοῦς*. This is only to be interrupted, inevitably it seems, by the power of Strife, another, somewhat complementary and seemingly immaterial[66] force responsible for the world of appearances. How these two co-exist is beyond the scope of this work, but this idea of supernatural powers responsible for the world is a good indication of why Empedokles and Thales are often classified together—that is, they explain the manifold world of appearances as emerging from and returning to one position—for Thales, divine water, for Empedokles, the sphere of Love, which is the desirable and best state: *τὸ γεννῆσαν πρῶτον ἄριστον τιθέασι* ('make the primary generator the Supreme Good,' as Aristotle recounts).[67]

Examination of the cult of Acheloios in relation to Empedokles reveals further potential overlaps with the Thaletan tradition worthy of note. In my earlier work I suggested that there was a connection between Empedokles' philosophy and lifestyle and the cult of Acheloios and its surrounding mythos,[68] while completely overlooking the role of Pythagoras. It will help to review the essentials of that connection here. First, Empedokles was undoubtedly schooled in the Kypris-Acheloios tradition and this is clear from an examination of his writings in their historical context. For instance, Empedokles often speaks of Kypris (Aphrodite) and on Cyprus there is a long history of androcephalic quadrupeds.[69] Later, starting in the 7th century, man-faced bulls[70] and man-faced bull-centaurs[71] used to represent Acheloios become staples there for many centuries. These artifacts are indicative of the irrevocable connection between Kypris and Acheloios, which is brought out later in the works of Sophokles (*Trachiniae*) and Plato (*Phaedrus*) discussed in the next two chapters. In any case, Empedokles mentions specifically the sacredness of the bull and that altars to Kypris should not be stained with the blood of these sacred animals.[72] More, the very earliest coinage featuring Acheloios as a man-faced bull that appears in Sicily comes from Gela,[73] just south of Akragas, Empedokles' home, and they [Geloans] copied the iconographic posture of a protome directly from Cypriot coinage.[74] These coins were issued throughout Empedokles' life and several other nearby mints issued similar coins featuring Acheloios in the second half of the 5th century, all indicative of the fact that the cult of Acheloios was deeply embedded into the culture of Sicily during the time Empedokles lived. Additionally, found at Akragas and also dating to Empedokles' life, is a piece of pottery that shows Acheloios battling Herakles, his horn already torn from his head, and water springing from his mouth.[75] It is appealing to connect this piece to Empedokles' characterization of his own sayings as flowing like a 'stream,'[76] particularly because of the prevalent notion of assimilation in Acheloian cultic practice. Empedokles is also the only ancient author in the western world to discuss man-faced bull iconography, juxtaposing it with the minotaur: *βουγενῆ ἀνδρόπρῳρα...ἀνδροφυῆ βούκρανα*.[77] This is interesting because it reflects

[66] Cf. Curd, Where are Love and Strife? Incoporeality in Empedocles, *passim.*
[67] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1091b10. Trans. Tredennick, *op.cit.*
[68] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*: Sinews of Acheloios, *passim*, but see especially 17ff.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 21, Figure 28 and 29.
[71] Ibid., 22.
[72] Empedokles, Fr. 118(128) (ed. Wright).
[73] For the coinage of Gela, see Jenkins, *The Coinage of Gela*.
[74] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*: Sinews of Acheloios, 74.
[75] Louvre, Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities, Sully, first floor, room 39, case 4.
[76] Empedokles, Fr. 2(3); 103 (114) (ed. Wright). Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*: Sinews of Acheloios, 24.
[77] Empedokles, Fr. 52 (61) (ed. Wright).

an inclination, presumably stemming from Thales' initial abstraction, of 'demythologizing' the iconography.

But there are other stories about Empedokles that suggest an even deeper affiliation with the cult of Acheloios. For instance, he is said to have diverted a waterway at his own expense.

Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, 8.70:

> When a pestilence attacked the people of Selinus because of the foul smell of the river nearby, so that the inhabitants were dying and their women suffering miscarriages, Empedocles conceived the plan of diverting the course of two nearby rivers, bringing their water to the place at his own expense; and by combining the streams he sweetened the water.[78]

This certainly indicates a connection to Acheloios (and the protection of children, for that matter), insofar as he is the ultimate symbol of regulated rivers in antiquity, and in particular throughout Sicily.[79] Indeed, Acheloios appears on late 5th century coins from Selinos, indicating he was worshipped at the very locale in which Empedokles performed this great feat. This feature of Empedokles' biography is even more interesting when we learn that Thales, too, is said to have regulated the Halys river.[80]

The second part of this same story tells of the deification of Empedokles' before his death, and the story involves his appearance next to a river:

Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 8.70:

> When the pestilence had thus been brought to an end and the people of Selinus were feasting on the riverbank, Empedocles appeared, whereupon the citizens rose up, made obeisance, and prayed to him as to a god.[81]

Here we have an account that is consistent with other accounts of apotheosis and assimilation with river gods.[82] So, for example, the aforementioned Euthymos of Locri was absorbed into the Kaikinos river, assimilating with it and assuming the form of a man-faced bull in local art.[83] Empedokles' appears to have experienced a similar form of apotheosis, and one cannot help but connect it to the river god lore of the times, being deified in a fashion similar to Pythagoras (and potentially Hippo)—presumably all thinkers recognizing to some degree that their inner *δαίμονες* were smaller parts of the cosmic *νοῦς* (in the manner that Finkelberg describes),[84] much like the rivers of the world are sinews of Acheloios.

[78] Trans. Mensch, *op.cit.*
[79] Helga Di Giuseppe, Acheloo e le acque deviate, in *I riti del costruire nelle acque violate. Atti del Convegno Internazionale. Roma 12-14 giugno 2008* (Roma: Scienze e Lettere, 2010), 79-86.
[80] Herodotus, *Histories,* 1.75 (Th 11).
[81] Trans. Mensch, *op.cit.*
[82] Taylor, River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity, 21-3.
[83] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*: Sinews of Acheloios, 87, 96.
[84] Finkelberg, *Heraclitus and Thales' Conceptual Scheme,* 276.

In the final analysis, although Empedokles offered a largely unique and novel philosophical worldview, it seems justified to trace some elements of Empedokles' thoughts back to Thales, for Thales' favorite pupil was Empedokles' own teacher. Both thinkers believed in an individual *δαίμων,* and since Thales seems to be our first authority to hold such a novel view,[85] it would be unfair not to credit him with planting the initial seed for Empedokles' philosophy. Although we have no perfect knowledge of Thales' views on metempsychosis, Pseudo-Plutarch's comments might indicate that we can flush out more of his initial vision in Empedokles' thought, in which the individual becomes a god. This idea of apotheosis would certainly be fitting with the Acheloios tradition, in which the role of Acheloios as a psychopomp, with whom one assimilates in cult, is an essential feature. And, indeed, Pythagoras certainly bridges the gap between Thales and Empedokles concerning, at the very least, gastronomical purification and its relation to state of the soul.

Conclusions

What can we say from the admittedly fragmentary evidence gathered? First, although the moral precepts exhibited above ultimately have a Cypriot origin, they seem to have been passed down from Thales to Pythagoras, as indicated in Iamblichus, and, by extension, also to Empedokles. This is not to say there were not other important cultural influences shaping the nuances of the later thinkers' thoughts, but nonetheless the written tradition sketches a rather clear line of influence and this is supported by the historical and archaeological context. Second, like Thales, Pythagoras, Hippo, and Empedokles were certainly influenced by the cult of Acheloios and its surrounding mythos—all inhabited areas in which Acheloios was utterly pervasive, and all apparently incorporate Acheloian elements into their thinking and activities. For Pythagoras, it probably had something to do with the transmigration of the soul as it pertains to water, purification, and apotheosis. For Hippo, the soul itself seems to have become aquatic, and apotheosis is also an important theme, to judge from the inscription on his tomb. For Empedokles, we likewise have a fascination with metempsychosis and gastronomical purification, and he is even deified by a river in customary fashion. Unfortunately, because the evidence of these figures is admittedly fragmentary, they cannot tell us very much about Thales' actual philosophy, except that it was very nuanced and not the material monism many mistakenly apply to the thinker. For a more robust understanding of Thaletan philosophy we need now look at the next generation of inspired thinkers, first Sophokles, then Plato, and there the evidence will show that our arguments from Chapters 9 and 10 have great merit.

[85] Ibid.

Chapter 11

Sophokles' *Trachiniae*: The Interplay of Gods and Souls

'The account of daimons and heroes should be pursued in parallel with the account concerning the gods.'

-Pseudo-Plutarch[1]

We saw in Chapter 9, following Finkelberg's assessment, that there is good reason to think that Thales attributed an individual soul or *νοῦς* to each person—an inner *δαίμων* —and that this was somehow part of a larger cosmic *νοῦς*. In much the same way, we've seen evidence that, for Thales, the manifold world of appearances emerged from an underling reservoir of (divine) water, and eventually everything would return to it. Both of these One-Many relations were connected to the idea that the rivers of the world are the sinews of Acheloios, where I argued that the mythos of Acheloios and related cultic practices tacitly expressed the idea of a qualified threefold *ἀρχή*, and that Thales seems to have developed his philosophy from this underlying mythological and cultic background. Now it is time to examine Sophokles, one of the so-called initiated,[2] to see precisely how Acheloios relates to the individual person in the mythological tradition, because doing so will give us a glimpse of the same ancient customs (Orphic-Dodonaean) that appear to have influenced Thales—specifically how souls are related to water gods and the role of assimilation in this relationship. To that end, in this chapter we'll look at two things. First, we'll determine precisely how Sophokles embeds Acheloios into the play and makes him a fundamental component to Herakles' apotheosis, operating as the purifying agent necessary for the transmigration of the soul to a state of divinity. Second, we'll examine some coins and artifacts that, (1) support the reading, and, (2) indicate Sophokles' description is reflective of Orphic-Dodonaean practices that pre-date Thales and could have served as a source of influence for him, too. Ultimately, this reading will support our earlier consideration of Pythagoras, Hippo, and Empedokles, and also prove to be essential preparation for the engagement with Plato's *Phaedrus,* where the setting for the discussion of Thales and Acheloios is a microcosm of Dodona.

Acheloios in the *Trachiniae*

As I stated in my original essay on the topic:[3] Quite generally, Sophokles' play tells the story of Herakles' apotheosis. Herakles' wife, Deianeira, whom Herakles took from Acheloios in an epic battle mentioned in the opening lines, is at their home awaiting his return from his labors, when she learns that he is on his way from Euboea. It was there that Herakles utterly ravaged the place and unjustly stole all its women. (Deianeira was originally told a different story from what actually transpired.) After Deianeira learns that Herakles has fallen in love with

[1] Pseudo-Plutarch, *Plactia philosophorum* 1.8.882b1-7. Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[2] Sophokles, *fr.* 837 Radt (753 Nauck), Plutarch, *Moralia* 21 E.
[3] Molinari, Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and the Apotheosis of Herakles: The Importance of Acheloios and Some Numismatic Confirmations, 1-29.

a young maiden from Euboea, named Iole,[4] she devises a plan to win back his love. However, her plan is based on the deceitful advice she received from the centaur Nessus in an earlier episode. (Nessus tried to rape Deianeira and Herakles shot him with an arrow.) As Nessus was dying midstream, he told Deianeira to take some of his blood, and that if Herakles ever fell for another woman, to anoint something with it and give it to him and it would essentially break the spell—As we will see, he left out some important details. Deianeira does this when the time comes, anoints a robe that is then delivered to Herakles, who was delayed by a crowd and the performance of sacrifices. As soon as the robe is put on, the fire from the sacrifice causes Herakles to sweat, which binds the cloak to his torso, and there begins the hundreds of very graphic lines recounting the tortuous, grueling death of Herakles. After begging for his son, Hyllos—or in fact anyone—to kill him, Herakles finally convinces Hyllos to carry him to Mt. Oeta and build a pyre and burn him. Hyllos does this, with help, and this pyre is depicted on a coin from Tarsos, which we will also discuss.

Impiety toward Acheloios

Sophokles uses the theme of impiety in the play to highlight the transgressions of Herakles and establish the parameters for his redemption, and in both cases it is fundamentally connected to water and bulls. Throughout the first half of the play, before Herakles is given the robe from Deianeira, there are repeated references to impiety relating to Acheloios and the rituals associated with him and queen Kypris, with whom Acheloios, as discussed above, has very close affiliations.[5] This is evident right from the opening stanzas: Acheloios, identified with water itself, was a key figure in pre-nuptial lustratio rituals.[6]

Sophokles, *Trachiniae* 6-9:

> While I still lived in the house of my father Oeneus, in Pleuron, I suffered painful affliction in the matter of my wedding, if any Aetolian woman did. For I had as a wooer a river, I mean Achelous...[7]

Opening with the looming marriage of Deianeira is a deliberate narrative strategy: Herakles is openly fighting Acheloios for his bride, and in doing so violating the will of the god instrumental in pre-nuptial ritual, thus a double, or reinforced violation occurs here. (Even the Greek words for husband and wife share a common origin with Acheloios.)[8] The underlying theme of the lustratio rituals is suggested also at *Trach.* 148 (*παρθένου γυνή*), in which παρθένος (*parthénos*) refers to a maiden, deriving its name from Parthenope, Acheloios' own daughter, and *γυνή* (*gynḗ*) to a (married) woman. In fact, later we learn that Deianeira is a 'bride without wedding' (*Trach.* 893ff), essentially indicating a breach of ritual propriety, and presumably

[4] An anonymous reader for the journal *KOINON* pointed out the similarity between this story and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.
[5] For an overview of Acheloios and Cyprus, from where Kypris-Aphrodite originates, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, *passim*, but especially chapter 2.
[6] Ibid., 63.
[7] All translations, unless otherwise noted, are from Hugh Lloyd-Jones: Sophocles, *Antigone, Women of Trachis, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).
[8] For discussion of the etymology of 'husband' (*ἀκοίτης*) and 'wife' (*ἄκοιτις*) in relation to the Acheloios tradition, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 94. For an example in ancient art of the early roots of man-faced bull iconography and lustratio rituals involving women, see Winter, *Frau und Göttin: Exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im Alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt*, no. 74, which depicts two man-faced bulls surrounding a woman and holding (presumably) a pot of water over her head.

this description would have carried an obvious link to Acheloios for the audience. Herakles' 'marriage' to Deianeira was therefore not legitimate, because he took her from Acheloios and thus the proper involvement of Acheloios in ritual could not occur.

The physical location of the bulk of the play is also particularly revealing in terms of Herakles' transgressions. In the play, Herakles was marching against *Euboea* (*Εὔβοια*),[9] which in Greek literally means 'good ox': the prefix *εὖ* (*eû*), meaning 'well' or 'good,' is attached to a derivative of *βοῦς* (*boûs*), meaning 'bull, ox, or cow.' This is of the utmost importance, and so far as I can determine, has gone unacknowledged in the literature. The choice of Euboea was not random, but deliberate on Sophokles' part insofar as it adds another layer to the atrocities committed by Herakles. Herakles' transgressions in Euboea are wrongdoings against the 'good ox'—the god of water. The Acheloios-Euboea link is strengthened by the fact that the earliest extant cultic representation of Acheloios in Greece proper comes from Oichalia in Euboea, dating to the second quarter of the fifth century BC.[10] And in the play, even the meadow in which Lichas tells the story of Herakles' shameful activities in Euboea is one in which the 'cows graze' (*βουθερεῖ / bouthereî*, *Trach.*188ff), further reinforcing the pervasive bovine context. Thus, the physical background of the bulk of the play is situated within Euboea, which the audience would connect with Acheloios. Modern readers would presumably miss this connection because they are introduced to Acheloios largely through Deianeira's description, which, as in other cases, is not entirely accurate (she sees Acheloios as a horrible monster). Granted, her fear of being wed to a shape-shifting deity that appears in various, terrifying forms, is certainly legitimate. But we must be cautious not to misinterpret the play by filtering Acheloios entirely through Deianeira's perception.

Other references to 'sins' against Acheloios are even more blatant. Indeed, Herakles is going to sacrifice an ox(!)[11] on the shore of that sacred landscape (*Trach.* 237ff), repeated later for emphasis at *Trach.* 609 and *Trach.* 754ff. As Lichas tells us, Herakles has destroyed the land of these women (*Trach.* 240f: 'Because of a vow, since he has conquered and devastated the land of these women whom you see with your own eyes').[12] The connotation, to me, is that he conquered the land of the *good ox*, Acheloios, who opened the play and is always operating at a sub-textual level as water itself (hence Acheloios as underlying or governing agent in the mythological tradition, reminiscent of Thales' *ἀρχή*). Indeed, Herakles did not just destroy the area, he even stole the women from Euboea (*Trach.* 293ff), just as he stole Deianeira from Acheloios. He even went so far as to kill the king (Eurytus) and steal his daughter.[13] The connection of Iole to Acheloios as 'good ox' is emphasized when Lichas is not forthcoming with Iole's name to Deianeira, instead insisting she is 'one from Euboea!' (*Εὐβοιίς / Euboiís*, *Trach.* 401). Sophokles, it seems, cleverly devised the original, false tale to add textual elements such as this, in which Iole is emphatically linked with the 'good ox.' Thus, in an important sense, Herakles' savagery violates those things sacred to Acheloios: the rituals associated with him, 'his' daughters (*παρθένου*), and even himself, associated with the country in which these episodes take place.[14] This might also explain why Sophokles describes Acheloios as *βούπρωρος* (*boúprōiros*) in the

[9] *Trach.* 74.
[10] Cf. Lee, Acheloos Peplophoros. A lost statuette of a River God in Feminine Dress.
[11] Cf. Empedokles, *Fr.* 118 (128) ed. Wright.
[12] Trans. Lloyd-Jones, *op.cit*.
[13] *Trach.* 360ff.
[14] To reiterate: It should be noted that Acheloios was not strictly linked to the river in Akarnania in Archaic times. See Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 96, for references.

opening stanzas, as opposed to something like bougen*ῆ ἀ*ndrórρ*ῳ*ra[15] or *ταύρους ἀνθρώπων κεφαλὰς ἔχοντας*[16] (a man-faced bull), which is his standard iconic representation.[17] Later on in the play as Herakles begins to realize the function of the deadly robe and what this means in terms of the oracles concerning his fate, he demands to be removed from the area: 'let me not die *here*!' (*Trach.* 802). Ultimately, all of this evidence reinforces the importance of Sophokles' choice of Euboea as the setting for desecration and thus the critical need for redemption, in which Acheloios plays an essential role.[18]

Kypris and Eros

Queen Kypris, who also plays an important role in the play, further emphasizes these violations of the sacred. In fact, Kypris operates as an essential force throughout the entire *Trachiniae*. In *Trach.* 354f, for instance, Eros is identified as the cause of all the strife ('and that it was Eros alone among the gods that bewitched him [Herakles] into this deed of arms').[19] This is reinforced at *Trach.*441: 'Whoever stands up to Eros like a boxer is a fool, for he rules even the gods as he pleases.'[20] And at *Trach.* 489 we learn that it is Eros, agent (or force) of Kypris-Aphrodite, that vanquishes Herakles: 'For he who in all other matters has excelled in might has been altogether vanquished by his passion (*ἔρωτος / érōtos*) for this girl.' This becomes even more explicit when Sophokles refers to the Cypriot Queen directly at *Trach.* 497ff: 'A mighty power is the Cyprian!'[21] Indeed, Kypris is called the umpire of the battle between Herakles and Acheloios at *Trach.* 515: 'and alone in the center the beautiful Cyprian was there to umpire in the contest.'[22] Later in the play the mighty queen is reintroduced (*Trach.* 860): 'And the Cyprian, silent in attendance, is revealed as the doer of these things.'[23] Thus the role of Kypris and Eros is clear and unambiguous: the overseer of the battle and its driving force.

As I mentioned earlier, it is critically important at this juncture to remind the reader that Kypris and Acheloios share an intimate bond.[24] Aside from the archaeological evidence (early coinage likely from Paphos featuring Acheloios; a long history of androcephalic bulls on the island, etc.), we have the aforementioned parallels from Empedokles (prohibition of bull slaughter, devotion to Kypris, etc.), and the shrines to Aphrodite where Acheloios was also worshipped (e.g. Miletos and Naucratis).[25] Empedokles' prohibition of the slaughter of bulls is particularly relevant and worth citing in full:

Empedokles, *Karthamoi* 118(128)

[15] Empedokles, Fr. 61, Aelian, *Nat. anim.* 16.29.
[16] Berosus, *FGrHist* 680 F 1, Fr. 12 (ed. Schnabel).
[17] For an interesting, alternative interpretation, see M. Clarke, An Ox-Fronted River God: Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 12-13, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology,* Vol 102 (2004): 97-112.
[18] Contra G.M.A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), 5: 'The gods are taken for granted in Sophoclean tragedy which centers upon human characters.'
[19] Trans. Lloyd-Jones, *op.cit.*
[20] Cf. *Trach.* 465 (beauty destroyed her life)
[21] Trans. Lloyd-Jones, *op.cit.*
[22] Ibid., 181. Note that different words are used in the description, 'Zeus the god of contests decided well,' in *Trach,* 26.
[23] Ibid., 209.
[24] One of the earliest representations of Acheloios on Greek coinage probably comes from Paphos, and there are clear iconographic similarities between the Cypriot coins and slightly later Italian types. For discussion, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, Chapter 5.
[25] For the earlier attestation of the link, see ibid., 24-5.

> Her [Kypris] they propitiated with holy images and painted animal figures, with perfumes of subtle fragrance and offerings of distilled myrrh and sweet-smelling frankincense, and pouring on the earth libations of golden honey. Their altar was not drenched by the (unspeakable?) slaughter of bulls, but this was the greatest defilement among men—to bereave of life and eat noble limbs.[26]

According to my reading of the play, Sophokles must have been aware of these very ancient traditions, as were (presumably) the audience members. I say this because the employment of specific themes—Acheloios, Euboea, Kypris, and the outrageous sacrifice of bulls—serves a very clear purpose in establishing the parameters for understanding Herakles' violations of the sacred and, as we will soon see, his redemption. Incidentally, even the centaur Nessus, who plays a pivotal role in the poisoning of Herakles, is a reference to bulls, 'centaur' coming from the Greek *Κενταύρου* (*Kentaúrou*), meaning 'like bull,' which is used by Sophokles in place of his name for added emphasis: *Κενταύρου* (*Trach*. 831); *Κένταυρος* (*Trach.*1162). As explained in my previous work, following Semerano, the word probably stems from Semitic *ken-* (as well as, such as) and *tora* (bull).[27] Indeed, there are many Cypriot man-faced bull centaurs and corresponding examples of Acheloios as a centaur in early Greek art.[28] Hence Levy, in her analysis, refers to Nessus as 'the double of Acheloös.'[29] Ultimately, the inclusion of Kypris reinforces the Acheloian connection and indicates Sophokles is drawing his material from a very deep and ancient well.

Dodona

The repeated references to Euboea and the Cypriot Queen are not the only links to Acheloios by any means. Another essential link is the connection to Dodona, which plays a pivotal role in the play, for the oracles of Dodona tell Herakles his fate. Dodona is interesting because the earliest goddess of the oracle there is said to be Dione, mother of Aphrodite (Kypris!) with Zeus,[30] and she is also a water spirit.[31] Interestingly, in the Orphic tradition, she is not the daughter of Okeanos but instead, Ouranos.[32] This Orphic distancing from the Okeanos tradition makes sense, because we learned from Ephorus that at Dodona nearly all patrons were instructed to make a sacrifice to Acheloios, and also that the equating with water and Acheloios began there,[33] a claim which Servius says is an Orphic belief.[34] Hence, the Dodonaean-Orphic connection is deeply rooted and Acheloios is an essential component to that connection.

The first case in which Dodona is mention is *Trach.* 170ff, in which it is prophesized by the 'doves' of Dodona (oracles, priestesses of Dione) that Herakles will see an end to his suffering, possibly through death, after he'd been absent three years. The second reference comes at *Trach.*1167ff; here Herakles himself recounts receiving the oracle from the Selli (the name for

[26] Trans. Wright, *op.cit.* Cf. Plato, *Laws* 782c.
[27] G. Semerano, *L'*infinito.Un *Equivoco Millenario. Le antiche civiltà del Vicino Oriente e le origini del pensiero Greco* (Milano : Mondadori, 2001), 14.
[28] Isler, *Acheloos*, no. 74-76 and no. 85. The man-faced bull quickly overshadowed the bull centaur iconography and became the standard representation for Acheloios in the Greek world.
[29] G. Rachel Levy, The Oriental Origin of Herakles, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 54, Part 1 (1934): 44.
[30] Homer, *Iliad* 5.370
[31] Carl Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 68-9.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ephorus, *FgrH* 27= Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.18.6.
[34] Servius, Fr. 344 (ed. Kern).

the priests of Dodona, as opposed to the priestesses), concerning the end to his suffering— 'But it meant no more than that I should die; for the dead do not have to labour.'[35] The underlying link to Acheloios best explains why Sophokles uses the oracles from Dodona, as opposed to the more common Delphi. This explanation may have escaped notice in the extensive scholarship on Sophokles because commentators have been focused exclusively on Zeus.[36] In any case, as we will entertain below, Herakles is becoming intermixed with Acheloios in the play, becoming in a sense the co-sacrifice necessary for his own apotheosis, an interpretation supported by the Dodonaean origin of the prophecy and call for sacrifice to Acheloios.

Lokris

Another essential, seemingly overlooked link to Acheloios is the mention of Herakles' screams heard from Lokris to Euboea:

Trach. 786ff:

> For the pain dragged him downwards and upwards
> shouting and screaming; and the rocks around resounded,
> the mountain promontories of Locri and the Euboean peaks.

This is not the Lokris near Delphi, in my opinion. This is a reference to Lokri Epizephyrii (modern day Calabria), which is one of the most important cultic sites for Acheloios in the entire ancient world, and a substantial part of the section on Greek man-faced bulls found in *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ* was devoted to some archaeological discoveries there.[37] The use of Lokris emphasizes the fact that Acheloios is being avenged for all the sins committed by Herakles, because at that location were found sixteen arulas featuring not just Acheloios, but Acheloios battling Herakles (Figure 39). These were in some cases used as the walls for tombs, further indicating the psychopompic nature of Acheloios, which is also occasionally exhibited on coins.[38] Extrapolating from the story and archaeological context we can say that Acheloios, as a liminal figure, is essential to the process of the transmigration of the soul—and this is not always an easy journey, beginning, as we'll see, with a tortuous process of purification. Hence, Sophokles' use of Lokri Epizephyrii skillfully reinforces Acheloios' role as an agent in Herakles' apotheosis, akin to his general role as psychopomp, as exhibited in the arulas of Lokri itself.

[35] *Trach.*1172f, Trans. Lloyd-Jones, *op.cit*.
[36] Cf. e.g., Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die dramatische technik des Sophokles* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1917), 89-164. Surprisingly, although Dodona is mentioned repeatedly in his treatment, Acheloios is barely mentioned, despite the fact that Tycho's father, Ulrich von Wilamowitz- Moellendorff contributed to the text, and he argued, in *Der Glaube Der Hellenen*, that Acheloios was the original Hellenic god of all water who was displaced by the Carian Okeanos (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Der Glaube Der Hellenen*, 219). Perhaps Ulrich's opinion on Acheloios as the original Hellenic god developed after his son Tycho published his commentary. See also Sir Richard Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments, with Critical Notes, Commentary, and Translation in English Prose. Part V: The Trachiniae* (Cambridge: UP, 1902); Bruce Heiden, Trachiniae, in *Brill's Companion to Sophocles* (London: Brill, 2012), 129-148 (or any other contribution in that important resources, for that matter); Charles Segal, The Oracles of Sophocles' 'Trachiniae': Convergence or Confusion?, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 101 (2000): 151-71, etc.
[37] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 66-8.
[38] At Panormos, F. Imhoof-Blumer, Fluß- und Meergötter auf griechischen und römischen Münzen. (Personifikationen der Gewässer), *Schweizerische Numismatische Runschau,* Band 23 (1924), Pl.II, no.12a. At Katane, so Isler, *Acheloos*, no. 345; Carmen Arnold-Biucchi, *The Randazzo Hoard 1980 and Sicilian Chronology in the Early Fifth Century B.C.* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1990), 22-24.

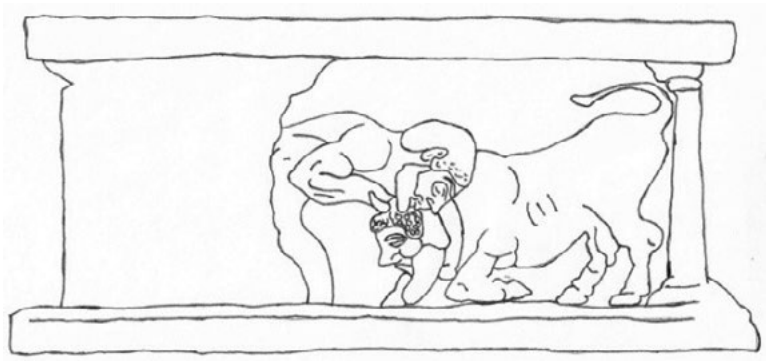

Figure 39: Arula from Locri featuring Herakles wrestling Acheloios, mid sixth century BC. Author's drawing.

Assimilation

The notion of assimilation is paramount to understanding Acheloios' role in the apotheosis, beyond the mere role of adversary for the hand of Deianeira, and it is here that we might get some clue to the broader *δαίμων-θεοί* relation emerging from the Thaletan tradition and its engagement with the cult of Acheloios. The most important indication of assimilation comes from the following passage, a pivotal turning point in the text in which Herakles transitions from one who happily sacrifices one hundred cattle (the very practice which Empedokles condemned above) to sacrificial victim (*Trach.* 763-771):

> At first, poor man, he spoke the prayer cheerfully, rejoicing in the fine attire. But when the resinous pine blazed up, *the sweat came up upon his body*, and the thing clung closely to his sides, as a carpenter's tunic might, at every joint; and a biting pain came, tearing at his bones; then a bloody poison like that of a hateful serpent fed upon him.[39]

The key word here is *ἱδρὼς* (*hidrɔ̀s*, sweat), related of course to *ὕδωρ*. As was explained above, Acheloios is equated with water itself, a practice stemming in part from Orphic-Dodonaean practices; indeed, Sophokles is one of our sources for this belief (*Fr.* 4). In the depiction of the initiation of Herakles' demise, we therefore should regard Acheloios as the active agent transforming Herakles into the sacrificial victim since it is the water, as sweat emerging from Herakles, that makes the cloak stick to Herakles and consume his flesh in a reversal of the flesh he would have (presumably) consumed.[40] It is therefore the internal moisture, the *ἵνας... Ἀχελωΐου*, that binds the punishment to Herakles and initiates the purification. This element of assimilation puts Acheloios in a unique role in the play, whereby it is through him that the redemption can occur, as the purifying agent necessary for Herakles' apotheosis, and thus we have some indication of Herakles' *δαίμων* becoming a god through assimilation with Acheloios.

[39] Translation Lloyd-Jones, *op.cit*.
[40] Charles Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Norman, Oklahoma: Oklahoma UP, 1999), 67: 'But here too the ritual backfires. Instead of dispelling that impurity, it intensifies it. Instead of desacralizing Heracles, it makes him *sacer*—as the victim, not the celebrant.'

A further indication of this assimilation is the role of the *πέπλον* (*péplon*, the robe Deianeira gives Herakles), which can refer to any piece of cloth including those draped over the deceased, but in some cases is used specifically for women. This is how it appears on the earliest cultic statue of Acheloios in Greece proper, Acheloios Peplophoros.[41] That artifact comes from Euboea—the land of the good ox himself. Taylor thinks this statue indicates the emasculation suffered by Acheloios when Herakles snatched his horn.[42] Likewise, Sophokles appears to be playing on that same theme: Herakles is being emasculated for his impiety—rather than getting Iole, the object of his sexual desire, he will suffer a horrible, painful death. Indeed, when Herakles was a slave of Omphale he was forced to dress (and act) as a woman,[43] which, when coupled with the example in cult, is another indication that Sophokles is alluding to assimilation between Herakles and Acheloios. Indeed, at one point Herakles is described as a weeping girl (*Trach.* 1071), and Herakles' priest at Kos wore women's clothes.[44] One early scholar even connects the Tarsian Sandan to Herakles via the 'Sandyx,' the dress worn by Herakles in service to Omphale.[45] We should also mention again the Etruscan mirror dating to the mid fourth century that features Herakles battling Acheloios, labeled *AXΛAE* and *HEPAKΛE*.[46] On this piece Acheloios is clearly depicted with a feminine face (no beard) and long, flowing hair, so the phenomenon of a feminine Acheloios was not isolated to Greece proper and the eastern colonies.

Ultimately, all of the aforementioned references to Acheloios help establish the parameters of Herakles' sins and point also to the means of redemption: the prophecy concerning Herakles' fate was issued at Dodona, where Acheloios is a counterpart to Zeus and enjoys sacrifices with each pronouncement of the oracles; the inclusion of Lokris reinforces the liminal role of Acheloios in the process of Herakles' apotheosis; and the idea of assimilation is an indication that Acheloios operates in a fundamentally different role from other deities, one that serves as a watery gateway to the divine, that through whom the appropriate purification can occur.

Herakles' Wretched Purification

There is no ambiguity in the play that Herakles is being purified of his sins, which the careful reader will note were violations of the sanctity of—and ritual propriety due—to Acheloios (and Kypris, for that matter). This purification is brought about in part by an agent of Acheloios, the bull-like Nessus. Since, as we have seen, Acheloios is the governing source of all water, Nessus, as a watery figure attempting to rape Deianeira in a stream, falls under the domain of Acheloios, just like the river gods, nymphs, and sirens.[47] It is worthwhile to take the time to appreciate Sophokles' language concerning Herakles' purification, because it drives home the gravity of his violations and hence the urgent call for purification. Sophokles paints a picture of 'dire calamity,'[48] witnessed first-hand by his own son, Hyllos. At first it is described as a 'biting

[41] Lee, Acheloos Peplophoros. A lost statuette of a River God in Feminine Dress, 319.
[42] Taylor, River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity, 36.
[43] Taylor, River Raptures: Containment and Control of Water in Greek and Roman Constructions of Identity, 36. See also Nicole Lorax, *The Experiences of Tiresias: The Feminine and the Greek Man,* trans. P. Wissing (Princeton: UP, 1995), 116-39; Monica S. Cyrino, Heroes in D[u]ress: Transvestism and Power in Myths of Herakles and Achilles, *Arethusa* 31 (1997): 207-41; Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, Herakles Re-dressed: Gender, Clothing, and the Construction of a Greek Hero, in *Herakles and Hercules: Exploring a Greco-Roman Divinity*, ed. Louis Rawlings and Hugh Bowden (Swansea, 2005), 51-69.
[44] Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel*, no. 340.
[45] Lydus, *de Magistr. Roman.* III, 64.
[46] Isler, Acheloos, 26, 47, no. 230.
[47] See Levy, The Oriental Origin of Herakles, 44.
[48] Trans. Lloyd-Jones, *op.cit.*

pain...tearing at his bones'...as though 'a hateful serpent fed upon him' (*Trach.* 768ff). The mention of a serpent is surely another 'hidden' reference to Acheloios, who in the beginning of the play (and, indeed, in ancient vase paintings)[49] is described as a serpent (here *ἐχίδνης / echídnēs*, but cf. *Trach.* 12, *δράκων / drákōn*). Again, Herakles' pain is such that he throws himself to the ground and screams so loud that it can be heard in the land of the 'good ox' and the area where he is most vehemently worshipped as a liminal figure, Lokri (*Trach.* 788ff). Indeed, the pain at some points is referred to as 'a sight unspeakable,' (*Trach.*961), as though all other vivid descriptions fall short of the stark reality of the event. Nonetheless, there are plenty of other well-chosen words: it is 'savage,' (*Trach.*974);[50] 'a cruel plague,' (*Trach.* 1030); there are 'spasms of torture,' (*Trach.*1083);[51] and 'the putrid disease consumes him' (*Trach.* 987). At one point, the pain is so bad Herakles begs to be decapitated:

Trach. 1014ff:

> Ah, ah! Will no one come and lop off my head,
> ending the misery of my life? Ah, ah!

Such is the state of Herakles as his fate begins to unfold. To an Acheloios enthusiast, it reads like pure poetic justice. Of all his trials and tribulations (he mentions his labors, giants, monsters, etc.) nothing comes close to this episode and the horrible *δειλαία* (*deilaía*, 'evil, wretched thing')[52] that consumes him. His various labors are repeated slightly later, cf. *Trach.* 1089-1111, and again as paling in comparison to the present episode.

This idea of a wretched disease that will bring about redemption also has early roots, stemming from, so far as Dr. Sisci and I could trace it, the binary nature of early Near Eastern man-faced bulls. Most notably, there are two figures, the Lamassu and Sēdu (both depicted as winged man-faced bulls), traditionally representing a good protective deity and a demon of disease, respectively.[53] However, in at least one extant ritual text, both are labeled as agents of good:[54] 'you shall write "who repels the evil constables" and on his left "who causes to enter the sēdu of good and the lamassu of good"—you shall make...To block the entry of the enemy in someone's house.'[55] Here we thus have an agent that causes disease operating in an apotropaic manner—i.e., doing good. The use of disease as a force of good is related to the more general notion of pollution and consecration that has been explored in depth in terms of the Greek world by Dougherty: 'The Greeks conceptualize defilement as the inversion of a positive religious value; it still carries religious force. Blood and dust can bring pollution, but they can also consecrate.'[56] Sophokles apparently plays on this general theme of ambiguity from the very first lines (*Trach.* 1-3):

[49] British Museum 1971, 1101.1; Isler, Acheloos, no. 245.
[50] Cf. with Segal's treatment of this theme: Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*, 71-2.
[51] Cf. LSJ s.v. *ἄτη,* related to *Ἄτη*, 'personified, the goddess of mischief, author of *rash actions,*' etc. (emphasis added). This is a well-chosen word in terms of Herakles' behavior.
[52] *Trach.* 1027.
[53] Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 115.
[54] For discussion, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,*12.
[55] Wiggerman, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 11 (lines 122-3).
[56] C. Dougherty, It's Murder to Found A Colony, in *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics,* edited by C. Dougherty and Leslie Kurke (New York, 1993), 186.

> There is an ancient saying among men, once revealed to them, that you cannot understand a man's life before he is dead, so as to know whether he has a good or a bad one.[57]

That is to say, the ambiguity surrounding consecration and desecration, including the use of *φαρμακεὺς* (*pharmakeùs*) to refer to Nessus,[58] is an important hermeneutical layer in the same manner as the initial moral ambiguity, as is the ambiguity surrounding Deianeira's mistake (i.e. giving the robe to Herakles). Was it truly a mistake? She did not intend for Herakles to be tortured, but if it was necessary for his apotheosis, then in the end we know it was good. Thus, it is not until the end of the play—the final scenes of Herakles' life before becoming a god—that he comes to truly understand the necessity of his tortuous final hours in bringing about his apotheosis. In other words, it is through the torturous purification of past misdeeds that Herakles can be redeemed, and Acheloios is the active agent responsible.

Herakles' 'Death'

Recapping the end of the play is the perfect segue into the following discussion of some important numismatic and archaeological considerations. Herakles' death comes about after his realization of the true meaning of the Dodonaean prophecy that his labor would end. As Herakles realizes, it means he will die: 'But it meant no more than that I should die; for the dead do not have labour.'[59] Starting at *Trach.*1195ff Herakles instructs Hyllos to bring his body to Mt. Oeta, build a pyre, and place him atop it. Hyllos agrees, save for lighting the actual fire, and verbally reinforces the notion that Acheloios *and* Nessus (being *of* Acheloios) are the cause: *ἀλαστόρων* (*alastórōn*, 'of avenging deities,' *Trach.*1235). If Sophokles meant only Nessus, the target of Herakles' arrow, he would surely have used the genitive singular. Thus, the story ends atop Mt. Oeta with Hyllos' final, haunting lines, 'and none of this is not Zeus,' a concept reminiscent of a cosmic *νοῦς* and one we will return to shortly.

Numismatic and Archaeological Evidence

The Tarsos Bronzes and Connection to Orphism

Although the labors of Herakles have been depicted on coins, particularly the beautiful Roman Egyptian series of Antoninus Pius,[60] this episode, the culmination of his life and his transition into divinity, appears only at Tarsos, and there with some ambiguity. Recognition of this reverse type as representing Herakles (or Herakles-Sandan) on the funeral pyre is longstanding. Hill[61] made this identification in cataloguing the British Museum Collection and Ramsay commented on it in his famous study of St. Paul (who hailed from Tarsos).[62] Likewise,

[57] Trans. Lloyd-Jones, *op.cit.*
[58] *Trach.* 1140; Cf. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles*, 72.
[59] *Trach.* 1072f.
[60] Cf. e.g., K. Emmett, *Alexandrian Coins* (Lodi, 2001), no. 1555.4 (Nemean Lion), no. 1545.5 (Lernaean Hydra), no. 1547.4 (Cerynean Hind), no. 1543.6 (Stymphalian Birds), no. 1550.6 (Cretan Bull), no. 1553.6 (Mares of Diomedes), no. 1540.5 (Golden Girdle of Hippolyte), no. 1542.4 (Cattle of Geryon), no. 1554.10 (Apples of Hesperides), no. 1557.5 (Capture of Kerberos).
[61] G. F. Hill, *British Museum Cat. of Greek Coins: Lycaonia, Isauria, and Cilicia* (London: The British Museum, 1900), lxxxvi.
[62] W. M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), 148. The exploration of the role of Acheloios in plowing the soil for Christ will be discussed at length in the proposed third installment of the *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ* series. It was suggested, however, at the end of Book 1.

Figure 40a: Bronze coin from Tarsos featuring Herakles over Acheloios, c. 164 BC. Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC. Triton VII, lot 329.

Figure 40b: Enlargement of Acheloios as a winged man-faced bull. Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC. Triton VII, lot 329.

Levy, in her important study of Herakles' eastern origins, makes references to the same coin.[63] What none of these earlier studies observed, however, was that the figure under Herakles on some rare varieties is a (winged) man-faced bull—Acheloios. Instead, all the earlier accounts associate the 'creature' with the Sandan tradition exclusively, since Sandan is often depicted above a horned lion (cf. e.g., SNG France 1307-1343, and 1433-4).[64] In writing *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*, Dr. Sisci and I discovered the peculiar Acheloios variety of this bronze 'Burning Sandas' type from Tarsos (Figure 40a and Figure 40b).[65] There are eight extant specimens that feature Acheloios

[63] Levy, The Oriental Origin of Herakles, 40-53, but especially 51-2.
[64] Cf. CNG eAuction 354, lot 199.
[65] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 289. Catalog reference: MSP I, 501 (CNG, Triton VII, 329)= SNG

as a winged man-faced bull, with two distinct varieties differentiated by the field marks. The problem with the account in *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ* is that it did not properly address the significance of this issue in relation to the actual story of Herakles' apotheosis, and, moreover, listed the wrong local river: not 'Acheloios Kalykadnos,' but 'Acheloios Kydnos,' presumably.[66]

Tarsos, of course, was allegedly founded by Herakles, as we learn from Dio Chrysostom, and they honored him every year by lighting a pyre with his effigy: '... your own founder, Herakles, should visit you (attracted, let us say, by a funeral pyre such as you construct with special magnificence in his honour)...'[67] Moreover, there is relatively early evidence for a conflation between Herakles and Sandan; Levy provided the sources in her work, but they are worth repeating. For instance, Syncellus, a ninth-century Byzantine Scholar, in his *Chronographia*, mentions: *Ἡρακλέα τινές φασιν ἐν Φοινίκῃ γνωρίζεσαι (Δι)σάνδαν ἐπιλεγόμενον, ὡς καὶ μέχρι νῦν ὑπὸ Καππαδοκίων καὶ Κιλίκων*.[68] An even earlier scholar, Nonnus, makes the Herakles-Sandan connection without the mistaken (Δι) addition: *ὅθεν Κιλίκων ἐνὶ γαίῃ Σάνδης Ἡρακλέης κικλήσκεται.*[69] One of the more interesting commentaries, as mentioned above, comes from Lydus, a sixth-century Byzantine antiquarian, who connects the name Sandan to Herakles' robe, the 'Sandyx' he wore when enslaved by Omphale.[70] This is an interesting idea, especially since the *πέπλον* is an essential part of Herakles' apotheosis, and, indeed, the notion of the emasculation of both Herakles and Acheloios plays an important part in their shared *mythos*.

The final piece of literary evidence offered by Levy is most interesting. She quotes Berosus, a third-century Babylonian priest, as also equating the two: *Σάνδην δὲ τὸν Ἡρακλέα*.[71] Moreover, since the ideogram for Marduk is used to translate Sandan,[72] this passage confirms the Marduk-Sandan-Herakles link.[73] What we can presently add to this chain of scholarship is the following: Berosus also claimed that images of *ταύρους ἀνθρώπων κεφαλὰς ἔχοντας* (bulls with human faces) 'were set up (*ἀνακεῖσθαι*) in the temple of *Βῆλος* (Marduk).'[74] This fact, then, confirms that man-faced bull iconography would have been perfectly natural for Marduk (and probably Sandan, as well). But this should not be construed to mean that the man-faced bull beneath Herakles-Sandan on the coin is something other than Acheloios, at least for the Greek observer.[75] What it does confirm, rather, is that man-faced bull iconography is in no way incompatible with Sandan because his oriental equivalent, Marduk, was associated with

Levante 947 (this coin).
[66] This might be a unique instance in which a local embodiment is not intended.
[67] Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 33.47. See also Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 33.1; 33.45.
[68] Transcription of Syncellus, *Chronographia,* I, p. 290 (via J. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion* Volume I (London: MacMillan, 1990), 125, no. 3).
[69] Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, XXXIV, 19 (per Levy).
[70] *ταύτῃ καὶ Σάνδων Ἡρακλῆς ἀνηνέχθη,* Lydus, *de Magistr. Roman.* III, 64 (per Levy).
[71] Berosus, *Fragm.* p. 51 (ed. Richter) (per Levy).
[72] *KUB*. IX, 31, ii, 22; I, 36 (= HT. I, I, 29); Albrecht Götze, *Kulturgeschichte des Alten Orients*, III, I: *Kleinasien* (Munich, 1933), 127 (per Levy).
[73] Levy, The Oriental Origin of Herakles, 52.
[74] Berosus, *FGrHist* 680 F 1, Fr. 12 (ed. Schnabel). For discussion in relation to Tiamat and the *Enūma Eliš*, from which the Greek tale stems, see D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 26.
[75] The original dies, which are much more beautiful and intricate than later series, indicate a Hellenic engraver. It was a fairly common practice in antiquity for initial dies to be carved by a superior craftsman, and the prototype later copied in subsequent issues by apprentices. For the idea of bilingual iconography, which we likely see here, but in a Roman Egyptian setting, see Angelo Geissen, Mythologie grecque ou mystère d'Isis-Dèmèter?, in *Isis on the Nile: Egyptian Gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. Proceedings of the IVth International Conference of Isis Studies, Liège, November 27-29, 2008 (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 171),* edited by L. Bricault and Miguel John Versluys (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 181-195.

the iconography in Babylon. Indeed, as recounted above, according to the Weidener god list, Asallúhi (also depicted as a man-faced bull) was listed right after Marduk.[76] Thus our eyes are not deceiving us—it is indeed a man-faced bull, categorically distinct from the horned lions on later series.

In any event, archaeological attempts to find the pyre itself have failed,[77] though they have uncovered some enlightening artifacts: terracotta plaques featuring pyramidal 'monuments' with Sandan, similar to the coins. Originally Goldman differentiated the structures appearing on the coins and plaques, but later argued both show the pyre.[78] These plaques have been interpreted as cheap offerings at the shrine (or pyre) of Sandan-Herakles. According to Goldman, all of the plaques show a horned lion, though he acknowledges that none are complete. On the same hill where archaeologists found these plaques, which is presumably the same hill housing the original pyre, archaeologists found terracotta figurines of Hellenic Herakles, with no semblance of Sandan in the iconography and no objects relating to Sandan in the group.[79] This indicates that there was distinct worship of Hellenic Herakles at Tarsos.[80] Since the Bronze Age, a particular god would have many different forms within the same city, which is why distinct forms of Sandan and Herakles could be found here.[81] So the idea that a distinctly Hellenic Herakles might be worshipped in one ritual context right alongside Herakles-Sandan is perfectly normal, for Tarsos, at least. The same must hold true for Acheloios and the theriomorphic creatures appearing on later varieties of Tarsian coinage. Ultimately, all this evidence suggests that the change in iconography is rather commonplace, since the three figures—Marduk, Sandan, and Herakles—often overlapped in cult, and the same can be assumed for their respective iconographies.

The one question still remaining is: How do we know the reverse featuring a man-faced bull alludes to the Hellenic myth? And herein lies the segue back to considerations of the larger importance of the play. Let's consider one final piece of evidence—the eagle atop the pyre on the coin. This, to me, must be a numismatic device reflecting Sophokles' rather ominous final lines of the play, 'and none of these things is not Zeus,'[82] since the eagle is an emblem of Zeus. Recall, for instance, that Herakles does not vanquish Acheloios by his own might in the beginning of the play. Quite the contrary—we learn from Deianeira at *Trach.* 26, 'But in the end Zeus the god of contests decided well, if it was well.'[83] Thus it is Zeus' intervention at the outset that initiates the process of Herakles' apotheosis through the first 'profane' act

[76] Von Weiher, SpTU 3, 108, transliterating a Hellenistic period cuneiform tablet from Uruk.
[77] Hetty Goldman, The Sandon Monument of Tarsus, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 60, 4 (1940): 544). Goldman believes the creature below 'Sandan' is always a horned lion, comparing it to other representations in earlier oriental art (Goldman, 'The Sandon Monument of Tarsus,' 546, 550; citing Heuzey, *Les Origines orientales de l'art*, 239).
[78] Cf. Hetty Goldman, Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1936, *AJA* 41 (1937), 274-276. On later observations Goldman claims the plaques and the coins do show the same structure—a pyre in both cases. See H. Goldman, Sandon and Herakles, *Hesperia Supplements* 8, Commemorative Studies in Honor of Theodore Leslie Shear (1949): 164.
[79] Goldman, The Sandon Monument of Tarsus, 545; Hetty Goldman, Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1938, *AJA* 44 (1940): 72, Figure 22; Hetty Goldman, Preliminary Expedition to Cilicia, 1934 and Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1935, *AJA* 39 (1935): 529f.
[80] Phoenician Melcarth was also burned in a pyre each year. Goldman, The Sandon Monument of Tarsus, 545; Goldman, Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, 1938, 72.
[81] For early Bronze Age conflations, in which local variations of some gods occurred even in the same city, see Beatrice Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age*, Orbis biblicus et orientalis 11 (Fribourg: University Press, 1996), 44. The same is true of the Greek world.
[82] *Trach.* 1278. Trans. Lloyd-Jones, *op.cit.*
[83] Trans. Lloyd-Jones, *op.cit*.

against Acheloios (even while Kypris is the 'umpire' it was initiated by Zeus). And Herakles' ultimate consecration, initiated by the divinely-orchestrated desecration of Acheloios, positions Acheloios as the co-sacrifice—a cooperation achieved through assimilation—needed for Herakles' transition. Indeed, Sophokles ties all the loose ends together with his final line, driving home the notion that Acheloios operates as a liminal agent of Zeus, just like at Dodona, where the prophecies concerning Herakles originated. The artist that carved this die, which was surely the initial in the series, must have added this element to capture this particular idea, namely, that 'none of these things is not Zeus.' We therefore have Sophokles reinforce this notion gleaned from the Thaletan-Acheloian tradition, namely, that a cosmic deity somehow orchestrates the transition from *δαίμων* to *θεός*.

This iconographic interpretation as it relates to the play is supported by the fact that the conception of Acheloios vis-à-vis Zeus appears to derive from Orphic practices, which we have already linked to Dodona via Ephorus and Servius. In the Derveni cosmogony, the various different deities that are mentioned throughout the papyri are all portions of a cosmic *νοῦς*[84]—that is, with the exception of Acheloios. In terms of Acheloios, as exhibited earlier, we find that he 'stands out as the only physical operation in a series of creative acts stemming from Zeus' *μῆντις*.'[85] In other words, Acheloios, unlike the rest of the gods, is the name applied to the waters of the earth in the Derveni cosmogony: 'to the waters....the name Acheloios.'[86] Hence, there is a connection between this Orphic cosmogony and the operation of Acheloios in the play, because Acheloios is situated as the only god on earth[87]--one that grants access to the other gods, which was precisely the description found on the aforementioned Orphic prayer tablets of Cyprus (Kypris):

I. Kourion 131, 22-24:[88]

> *ἐνορκίσζω ὑμᾶς κατὰ τοῦ Αχελομορφωθ ὅστις ἐστὶν*
> *[μό]νος ἐπίγιος θεὸς Οσους οισωρνοφρις ουσραπιω ποιήσαιτε τὰ ἐνγεγραμ̣[μ]-*
> *[έν]α·*
>
> I adjure thee, assuming the form of Acheloios, who is the only god on earth, Osous Oisornophis Ousrapio [Osiris]: do that which is written here!

On this tablet, and there are many like them,[89] we have the practitioner adjure the gods by assuming the form of Acheloios (Αχελομορφωθ)—essentially assimilating with the god—and in so doing the practitioner is able to appeal (in this particular circumstance) to Osiris to intervene in some affair on his behalf. Hence it is via this (sometimes painful) watery assimilation that one is appropriately purified and allowed to connect with the divine. Indeed, on the Derveni Krater, another important Orphic artifact, one finds the upper handles are adorned with a

[84] For an excellent overview, see A. Bernabé, The Commentary of the Derveni Papyrus: Pre-Socratic Cosmogonies at Work, in *The Derveni Papyrus: Unearthing Ancient Mysteries,* Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava, Volume 36 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 108-125.
[85] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 23.
[86] *P. Derveni* XXIII.
[87] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, 23.
[88] Audollent, *Defixionum tabellae quotquot innotuerunt*, Tab. 29.
[89] Cf. I. Kourion 134, 138, and 142, all now housed in the British Museum. Cf. also I. Kourion 129, 133, 136, 139 and 140, which feature *Αχαλεμορφωθ,* not *Αχελομορφωθ*.

mask of Acheloios juxtaposed with a mask of Herakles, indicative of the essential role Acheloios played in Herakles' apotheosis in the Orphic tradition.[90] This connection of Orpheus to Acheloios is at least as old as Thales, since we have an Attic Black Figure vase dating to the first half of the sixth century that features Orpheus holding a lyre between two sirens, Acheloios' daughters.[91] In any event, this explanation—that Acheloios operates as an earthly counterpart to Zeus through whom the purification toward apotheosis occurs—ties the coin iconography together, makes sense of the confusing final lines of the play that seemingly emerge from nowhere, incorporates the extant evidence concerning both Orphic Derveni traditions and Dodona, and positions Acheloios in his historical role as expiatory sacrifice.[92]

Conclusion

In an important sense, then, Herakles' strenuous engagement with Acheloios is absolutely essential to the process of apotheosis. Acheloios is there at the outset, he remains as an underlying force throughout the entire story, he reemerges in full force in Herakles' own sweat at the climax, and, to judge from the numismatic evidence, he is there at the end, standing beneath Herakles on the pyre itself. Struggling with the water deity is therefore an essential component to apotheosis, and this struggle involves assimilation, which purifies the individual in the movement toward divinity. Hence we have the inseparable bond of Herakles and Acheloios that positions divine water in a truly liminal (psychopompic) role between man and the divine. Sophokles' work thus offers us a first-row seat to witness how this notion of water as an underlying and governing principle, seminally contained in the mythos of Acheloios, played out in the classical Greek world. What we experience with the *Trachiniae* is an insight into what Guthrie claimed was an isolated, 'Orphic,' individualized approach to the universe, but one that Finkelberg[93] rightly claimed was also a concern to the Presocratics.[94] For the *Trachiniae* is, ultimately, a story of individual man (and so, his *δαίμων*) in relation to the divine, and in particular the role of divine water as gateway to a more ultimate experience of divinity (becoming a god). Indeed, as we now turn to Plato in the next chapter, we'll see that it is again through Acheloios, now in the intellectual realm, that our minds can be purified in such a way that we can all behold the beauty of the real eternal absolute.

[90] Sulli, *Grecheskaya mifologiya*, s. 51.
[91] Heidelberg, Ruprecht-Karls-Universitat, 68.1.CVA 2434.
[92] See Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 13, note 195.
[93] Finkelberg, On the Unity of Orphic and Milesian Thought, 334.
[94] Hadot likewise suggested early Greeks might have been concerned with ways of life rather than simply doctrines and systems. See Pierre Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique*? (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), *passim*.

Chapter 12

Acheloios as the Horizon for an Understanding of Being: Plato's *Phaedrus* as Tribute to Thales

'So you have guided the stranger most excellently, dear Phaedrus'

-Socrates[1]

We now turn to Plato, where the philosophical tradition that started with Thales is alluded to throughout the *Phaedrus*. Although many people have written about the *Phaedrus*, very few have mentioned Acheloios, none have grasped just how essential his role in the dialogue is, and no one has recognized that the prominence of Acheloios in the dialogue is intimately connected to Thales, the first philosopher.[2] This chapter is therefore devoted to demonstrating that Plato positions Acheloios as the underlying foundation from which we progress toward a vision of the colorless, formless, and truly intangible Being,[3] and in doing so recognizes that Thales' engagement with the tradition of Acheloios unleashed the tree of philosophy itself—planting, as it were, the moist seed of dualism. For a variety of important reasons, Plato does not mention Thales by name in the *Phaedrus*—however, I'll demonstrate that he was undoubtedly referring to him in several key passages. This new reading of the dialogue is solidified by various pieces of contemporaneous art that illustrate the different Acheloian concepts embedded in the dialogue, as well as three of Plato's other dialogues, in which Thales is mentioned in contexts that directly link him to key *Phaedrus* passages.[4]

Overview of the Dialogue

It will be helpful first to provide a basic overview of the dialogue and the essential topics presented therein. The dialogue involves Socrates and his young friend, Phaedrus, and takes place outside the city on the banks of the Ilisos River, at a shrine to Acheloios. It was written about 370 BC, after Plato's first trip to Sicily and Southern Italy, [5] where cultic devotion to Acheloios was utterly pervasive.[6] A substantial portion of the beginning of the dialogue

[1] Plato, *Phaedrus* 230c. Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*

[2] Perusing the scholia reveals it was not noted in earlier commentaries. See William Greene, *Scholia Platonica* (Haverford: American Philological Society, 1938).

[3] I use 'Being' here, with capital 'B,' to mean 'Being as such, in its totality, in its difference from beings and the totality of beings' (to borrow the late Fr. William J. Richardson's phrasing). In Plato, *Phaedrus* 247c, the phrase is *οὐσια ὄντως οὖσα*, sometimes translated as something like 'truly existing essence,' (so cf. the translation of Fowler, *op.cit.*), but Sallis' '(the) beingly being being' is perhaps better (Sallis, *Being and Logos,* 144, note 27, who remarks that the phrase is virtually impossible to translate well).

[4] The reader will have to excuse the academic structure of the chapter—while useful for exhibiting the evidence and making the connections to demonstrate a point, a more enjoyable and enlightening approach would be a chronological analysis, such as one might experience in a lecture course. Due to space restraints, the foregoing analysis should be seen as a prolegomena to a more in-depth reading of the *Phaedrus.*

[5] See Plato, *Seventh Letter*, for an overview of the excursion.

[6] Some 22 Sicilian mints issued coins featuring a local embodiment of Acheloios in the 5th to 3rd centuries BC, many issues tied directly to mercenaries. For the distribution on coinage, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 74-8. See ibid., 17-68, for a comprehensive discussion of the emergence of the cult in the western Mediterranean.

consists not in Phaedrus' viewpoint but rather of a speech he is reading by Lysias, a prominent speech writer. The topic of the main speeches—Lysias',[7] and Socrates' two speeches,[8] is love. The first two speeches argue that the non-lover is to be preferred to the lover, since the lover is generally speaking fickle, exploitative, and what they deem as 'mad.' In the third speech, however, Socrates presents the proper view, namely, that the lover is absolutely to be preferred and explains that, although indeed a form of madness, it is a good thing and helps orchestrate the will of the gods (and here there are obvious parallels with Herakles' madness in the *Trachiniae*). Socrates' second speech also presents important views of the soul,[9] famously brought to life with the chariot analogy, and in particular the soul's experience of beauty in the world as gateway to an experience of fundamental reality.[10] Beauty is special because it alone among the forms can flow through the world into the eye of the beholder and calls out to the soul to return to the real eternal absolute and behold Being (250d). The soul therefore follows Zeus as he leads a procession of gods, and depending on how pure it is determines the parameters of its vision of Being. After these central speeches the topic rather curiously turns to rhetoric, and Socrates and Phaedrus discuss speech making and what constitutes good speech, and also present a critique of the written word, with some important qualifications. [11] In the final analysis, they decide that the philosopher is the one who has knowledge of the truth (as *ἀλήθεια / alḗtheia*, thus via beatific vision) and speaks authoritatively from that perspective.[12] Thus philosophy, in this dialogue, is presented as a response to beatific vision, and Thales' encounter with Acheloios is the first recognized occurrence of philosophical activity.

Allusions to Acheloios

Setting

One of the most important characteristics of Platonic dialogues is that the opening phrases are always intimately connected to the theme of the work. In Plato's *Phaedo*, for instance, the first word is *αὐτός,* because what is at issue in the dialogue is the nature of the individual self, or soul.[13] Likewise, the *Timaeus* begins ' one, two, three' and therein we can find a cosmology intimately related to *αρμονία* (*armonía*) and our position within the world. In a similar manner, the Theaetetus opens with the question, 'Just in from the country, Terpsion, or did you come some time ago?,' and the dialogue then questions the very notion of the static self over time (within the parameters of a discussion of epistemology). Moreover, just as the first phrase of the Platonic dialogues reveals an important theme, so the physical and/or social context is equally important for understanding Plato's work. Again in the *Phaedo,* for instance, we learn that the Athenians are awaiting an embassy to return from Delos, whereby they are commemorating Theseus' defeat of the Minotaur and his rescuing of the fourteen youths, and the dialogue, in turn, recasts Socrates as the philosophical Theseus.[14] One could look to just

[7] *Phaedrus* 230e-237a.
[8] First, at *Phaedrus* 237a-243e, second, at *Phaedrus* 243e-257b.
[9] Cf. esp. *Phaedrus* 245c-246a.
[10] *Phaedrus* 247c
[11] *Phaedrus* 257b-279c.
[12] *Phaedrus* 277e-278b.
[13] See the commentary of Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem, in *Plato's Phaedo,* trans. Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem (Newburyport: Focus, 1998), 2.
[14] Brann et al, *Plato's Phaedo,* 3.

about any of Plato's works and find a similar positioning of key terms and context at the outset that frame and enrich the dialogue.

So what about the setting of the *Phaedrus*? Although Plato actually only mentions Acheloios twice and seemingly in passing, consistent with all of Plato's dialogues,[15] the setting, here a place sacred to Acheloios on the banks of a river, pervades the entire exchange from start to finish. Before Socrates and Phaedrus even arrive at the location we begin to see the importance of the river to the forthcoming exchange: during the course of their walk from the city the interlocutors meander through the Ilisos on their way to find a spot to sit. As Phaedrus reflects, 'I am fortunate, it seems, in being barefoot; you are so always. It is easiest then for us to go along the brook with our feet in the water, and it is not unpleasant, especially at this time of the year and the day' (*Phaedrus* 229a).[16] This is an important descriptive element, because it positions water, just like Acheloios' positioning in myth and cult, in a liminal role—it is walking through the water that Socrates and Phaedrus will come to find a place to sit and talk, and water is thus operating here as a necessary ingredient in the pursuit of philosophical knowledge that will be accessed through the dialogue. Without treading through the water, the dialogue could not take place and its fruits not be relished.

Shortly thereafter, the two find the perfect spot for their discussion—perfect because, essentially, it is beautiful on a variety of levels. Note the delight in Socrates' description:

Plato, *Phaedrus* 230b-c:

> Socrates: By Hera, it is a charming (*καλή*) resting place. For this plane tree is very spreading and lofty, and the tall and shady willow is very beautiful, and it is in full bloom, so as to make the place most fragrant; then, too, the spring is very pretty as it flows under the plane tree, and its water is very cool, to judge by my foot. And it seems to be a sacred place of some nymphs and of Achelous, judging by the figurines and statues. Then again, if you please, how lovely and perfectly charming the breeziness of the place is! and it resounds with the shrill summer music of the chorus of cicadas. But the most delightful thing of all is the grass, as it grows on the gentle slope, thick enough to be just right when you lay your head on it. So you have guided the stranger most excellently, dear Phaedrus.[17]

As they recline to rest (230e) they are visually reminiscent of reclining river gods, the sinews of Acheloios, that appear in contemporaneous Greek art (Figure 41) and would become iconic staples in various cities for hundreds of years.[18] The reclined position is a deliberate element included into the dialogue, because the idea that the two figures are assuming the position of 'sinews' is reflective of the dialogues' opening lines which connect the *ἀρχή* with self-knowledge: 'Whither away, and whence do you come?' The point of this question, discussed in greater depth below, is that that from which one emerges and to which one returns is

[15] See especially John Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues,* Third Edition (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 105.
[16] Trans. H. Fowler, from *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus.* Translated by Harold Fowler, Plato Volume I, Loeb Classical Library 36 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).
[17] Trans. Fowler, *op. cit.*
[18] The earliest example of a reclined river god appears to be from the Parthenon, c. 438 to 432 BC, BM Collection, no. 1816.0610.99.

Figure 41: Parthenon reclining river god, 438 to 432 BC. Author's drawing of a statue in the British Museum. Inv. 1816,0610.99.

an essential component to self-knowledge. These opening stanzas thus irrevocably link the dialogue to Acheloios, and position him, as divine water, in a liminal role with the interlocuters in their concern with how they relate as individuals to ultimate, philosophical knowledge of the cosmos, of which they are a small part just like the sinews of Acheloios.

In a similar vein, something that has surprisingly gone unnoticed in the scholarship all these years is that the shrine on the Ilisos represents a microcosm of Dodona, home of the oldest Greek oracle,[19] which Plato alludes to in four ways. Recall that at Dodona, probably the earliest cultic site for Acheloios in Greece proper,[20] nearly all patrons were instructed to sacrifice to Acheloios, and thus the equating of Acheloios with water was of particular importance there. Ephorus tells us, specifically:

> As the best explanation of this puzzle I can offer only the oracles from Dodona. For in nearly all his pronouncements the god was accustomed to enjoy sacrifice to Acheloios, with the result that many people came to believe that by 'Acheloios' the oracle meant, not the river that flows through Akarnania, but 'water' *tout court*, and so they imitate the terms of address used by the gods. As a token of this, there's the fact that we usually speak that way in referring to the divine; for we call water 'Acheloios': above all in oaths and in prayers and in sacrifices, all the things that concern the god. (Ephorus no. 70 fr.20 *FGrH*)

The first key element in recognizing this allusion is the stream flowing underneath the plane tree: just as at Dodona there are allegedly underground streams flowing under the Oak of Zeus, so too at this shrine on the Ilisos a little stream bubbles under the plane tree.[21] Pliny describes Dodona as follows:

[19] *Phaedrus* 274b.
[20] Though still with a Phoenician origin, like Thales' family.
[21] Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 2.288; Servius, *ad Aen*. 3.466. H. Munro Chadwick, The Oak and the Thunder-God, *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 30 (1900): 36. See also D. Chapinal Heras, Between the Oak and the Doves: Changes in the Sanctuary of Dodona Over the Centuries, in *Simple Twists of Faith* (2017):17-38, note 15. Thus, the two are inseparable in the Dodonaean context.

Figure 42: Votive relief, found on the banks of the Ilisos, mid third century BC, featuring Acheloios as the throne of Zeus. Image courtesy of Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο (National Archaeological Museum), Athens.

The fountain of Jupiter in Dodona, although it is as cold as ice, and extinguishes torches that are plunged into it, yet, if they be brought near it, it kindles them again.[22] This spring always becomes dry at noon, from which circumstance it is called *αναπανόμενον* it then increases and becomes full at midnight, after which it again visibly decreases.[23]

Servius' description is likewise revealing: 'This temple is said to have been around a huge oak tree, from its root spring seeped out.'[24] Both of these accounts attest to the spring or fountain at Dodona under the Oak of Zeus, just like the spring under the plane tree. But there are three other 'hidden' links. First, the idea that the water is particularly cold at Dodona is reflected when Socrates remarks that the spring under the plane tree is *ψυχροῦ* (*psychroû*, 'very cool,' cf. Pliny's *gelidus*). Second, the fact that the state of the surrounding waters noticeably changes throughout the day is seemingly reflected when Phaedrus describes the waters 'especially at this time of the year and the day.' Both characteristics are unusual and appear to be idiosyncrasies of the local waterways at Dodona which Plato carefully integrates into his microcosm. The final allusion to Dodona concerns barefooted Socrates. Here Plato likens him to a priest of Dodona (in ancient times it was male oracles, the 'doves' coming later)[25] about whom Homer says the following: 'Dodonaean, Pelasgian, thou that dwellest afar, ruling over wintry Dodona,--and about thee dwell the Selli, thine interpreters, men with unwashen feet that couch on the ground' (*Iliad* 16.234f). Thus the dirty feet and reclined position are reflected in Socrates, who is always barefoot and 'intend[s] to lie down' (*Phaedrus* 230e).[26] Ultimately, the descriptions we have of the physical site of Dodona and its caretakers are similar to the physical context of the dialogue: there is a central tree and beneath it, cool water flows, granting access to various deities, and Socrates, who will communicate with such deities, is barefoot like the priests of Dodona who performed the very same function, and, for that matter, Socrates likewise sits reclined awaiting assimilation with the deities of the place.[27] Thus, virtually any contemporaneous reader of the dialogue would

[22] Interesting that the water of Dodona nourishes flame, perhaps also related to the Thaletan worldview.
[23] Trans. John Bostock and Henry Riley, from *The Natural History. Pliny the Elder*, trans. John Bostock, and H.T. Riley (London: Taylor and Francis, 1855).
[24] Servius, *ad Aen.* 3.466.
[25] Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 16.230ff; Herodotus, *Historiae* 2.52ff.
[26] Trans. Fowler, *op. cit.*
[27] Cf. Molinari, Αχελομορφωθ: Magistrates of Akarnania, *passim.*

immediately recognize that Plato is drawing a parallel between the relation of Acheloios and Zeus on the Ilisos and Acheloios and Zeus at Dodona, and also the role of the priests at Dodona in communicating with the Gods and Socrates and Phaedrus' similar function in the dialogue. Hence both the shrine on the Ilisos and the shrine at Dodona are sacred to Acheloios and the nymphs, and the location on the Ilisos operates as a microcosm that solidifies the underlying role of Acheloios in the dialogue.

The intimate relation of Acheloios and Zeus that we find at Dodona is represented in Greek art, too, and a review of certain examples helps confirm our interpretation. For instance, on the very banks of the Ilisos and dating to the second half of the third century, archaeologists found a votive relief sculpture.[28] On the relief (Figure 42), we find Zeus (Meilichios?) seated upon Acheloios (the head and neck of a man-faced bull, labeled in Alexandrian Greek ΑΧΕΛΩΙΟΣ).[29] Before them stand Acheloios' daughter, the nymph Kallirhoe, who holds a cornucopia and *phiale*, and also Herakles, with club and lion skin headdress. This artifact visually attests to the importance of Acheloios as an access point (or counterpart) to Zeus,[30] the foundation upon which Zeus operates in relation to man (like Acheloios in the *Trachiniae*), and thus Acheloios assumes his historic role as an essential, liminal figure vis-à-vis the soul. To be sure, on the aforementioned Etruscan mirrors (cf. Chpt. 9) nearly contemporaneous with the creation of the dialogue we find the same basic theme. The first, created c. 350 BC, depicts Zeus, Hera, Herakles, and Ialaus upon an enormous head of Acheloios, who serves as the underlying foundation of the interactions of all four (Figure 31).[31] The second, from c. 300 BC, again features the head of Acheloios, but upon it, this time, we find Eros and Psyche, two fundamentally essential elements of the dialogue (Figure 32).[32] Ultimately, an analysis of the setting and its reinforcement in contemporaneous (and slightly later) art demonstrates that Acheloios is utterly essential to the dialogue's theme, just as Acheloios is essential at Dodona and just as he was to Thales.

Concerning Abstraction from Acheloios

The fact that the shrine sacred to Acheloios is located on the banks of the Ilisos river, as opposed to the Achelous River of Akarnania,[33] is vitally important because it demonstrates the One/Many juxtaposition of Acheloios in relation to his sinews. (It also testifies to Ephorus' account that Acheloios, as water,[34] is manifest in every river in the ancient world, and, hence, we find cultic attestations of Acheloios from the 4th through 3rd century nearby at the

[28] For the location of the actual shrine, see W.Wilberg, Πρακτικα ἀρχαιολογικης ἑταιριας (Athens, 1893), pl. A.
[29] A.B. Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion. Volume 2, Zeus god of the dark sky (thunder and lightning)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), 1116-8, Figure 948.
[30] Cf. the discussion of the Derveni cosmogony in the last chapter, in which, like the Amathus prayer, Acheloios is the 'only god on earth.'
[31] Isler, Acheloos, no. 117=Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel*, IV, no. 347.
[32] Isler, Acheloos, no. 118= Gerhard, *Etruskische Spiegel*, no. 331b. There is also a Roman Provincial mosaic featuring Eros and Psyche reclined on a couch, and bordering the scene are images of vegetation and heads of Acheloios. From Zeugma, on display at the Gaziantep Museum of Archaeology. See Figure 43a.
[33] By Plato's time the Akarnanian River was named the Achelous, but in ancient times it was called the Thoas, and the Achelous River was, according to Homer, in Lydia, with some others of the same name strewn about the greater Greek world and supportive of Ephorus' account. For the orthography of the name Acheloios, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ*, viii, note 7.
[34] Sophokles, Fr. 4 (ed. Pearson); Euripides, *Bacchae* 625; Achaeus, *Athens* 4.9; Aristphones, *Lysistrata* 381; Ephorus, *FgrH* 27= Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.18.6.

following sites: the stadium near the Ilisos,[35] and also at Megara,[36] New Phaleron,[37] Eleusis,[38] and even Paros,[39] which is not terribly far away). Socrates' words concerning the figures at the shrine are particularly revealing: 'And it seems to be a sacred place of some nymphs and of Achelous, *judging by the figurines and statues*' (*Phaedrus* 230b-c).[40] This is indisputable proof that the iconography itself is attached to Acheloios. Is there any question Socrates was not viewing Acheloios in the form of a man-faced bull?[41] There is only one iconography that, just by virtue of its basic features, invariably signifies Acheloios in the Greek world, and that is a man-faced bull[42] (and of course the actual artifacts from the shrine confirm this). Accordingly, Plato makes it a point to reinforce the process of abstraction emerging from Acheloios throughout the dialogue, indicated first in Socrates' recognition of the deity represented by the figurines and statues. Thus, at *Phaedrus* 249b-c we learn, 'For a human being must understand a general conception formed by collecting into a unity by means of reason the many perceptions of the senses.' This process of abstraction is emphasized more fully later, at 266b:

> Now I myself, Phaedrus, am a lover of these processes of division and bringing together, as aids to speech and thought; and if I think any other man is able to see things that can naturally be collected into one and divided into many, him I follow after and 'walk in his footsteps as if he were a god.'[43]

In both passages the basic One/Many juxtaposition between the general and the particular is a reflection of the mythos of Acheloios and the notion that the rivers of the world are the sinews (particular manifestations) of him. Hence, the author of *P.Derveni*, writing virtually the same time as Plato did the *Phaedrus*, has no problem saying: '...the sinews of silver-eddying Acheloios....to the water...the name Acheloios...and the sinews...is the...each....'[44] We therefore have an abstraction emerging from the Acheloios tradition that consists of 'perceiving and bringing together in one idea the scattered particulars, that one may make clear by definition the particular thing which he wishes to explain,'[45] and this abstraction emerges from both the iconography present at the shrine and the general mythos of Acheloios vis-à-vis his sinews. Plato therefore uses the shrine to Acheloios on the bank of the Ilisos as the setting because Acheloios is a source of abstraction, indeed the principal source for Thales and philosophy itself. Thus, we have a double source of abstraction that occurs here right at the outset of the dialogue: the notion of Acheloios embodied in a local river requires an abstraction from the

[35] E.g., Launderer's relief, Isler, Acheloos, no. 202.
[36] Isler, Acheloos, no 198.
[37] Xenokrateia relief, Isler, Acheloos, no. 197.
[38] Larson, *Greek Nymphs*, 248-9, Figure 5.12.
[39] Stuart, *Antiquities of Athens*, Tom IV, pl. 51.
[40] Trans. Fowler, *op. cit.*
[41] If a regular bull, the comment makes no sense, for many things could be represented as a bull—Dionysos tauromorphos, for instance. If a horned youth, likewise, that iconography is demonstrably shown to apply to many different river gods (and the same goes for a bearded and horned man).
[42] Ignarra, *De Palaestra Neapolitana,* 232-43; Isler, *Acheloos*, 80-91; Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 91-6. This point confirms Isler's hypothesis of a hermeneutic codification of the iconography by classical times (Isler, *Acheloos*, 80-91.) I date the codification, at the latest, with the first coin featuring Acheloios and inclusive of a dolphin, presumably to indicate a watery dimension, struck in Miletos during Thales' life, c. 550 BC (Gulbenkian 720). I'll argue in the conclusion that Thales likely designed the very coin.
[43] Trans. Fowler, *op. cit.*
[44] Trans. D'Alessio, *op. cit.*
[45] *Phaedrus* 265d. Trans. Fowler, *op. cit.*

local river to the general deity equated with water; and, likewise, the iconography of the man-faced bull induces an abstraction to that very same deity—just as described above in Chapter 9.

Concerning Assimilation with Acheloios and the Nymphs

In addition to the notion of abstraction, Plato carefully weaves the notion of assimilation into the dialogue, with the specific purpose of highlighting Acheloios' role as a liminal agent and 'governing' principle—through whom greater truth will be revealed. The most obvious allusion to assimilation is the aforementioned positioning of the interlocutors: they are reclined and at rest just as the river gods of the ancient world, sinews of Acheloios. This is an important descriptive element, because later in the dialogue we'll see that self-knowledge is intimately related to knowledge of the *ἀρχή*, and the mythos of Acheloios ties these two concepts together. In a similar vein, just as these figures are sinews of Acheloios, we should also read passages concerning the nymphs and rivers in the broader Acheloian context—since he is (divine) water, they are all inseparable from him, much like Nessus in the *Trachiniae.*

Naturally, Plato goes beyond these descriptive elements and mentions assimilation outright in a number of passages, further supporting the interpretation of the dialogue in relation to Acheloios. The first two mentions are somewhat in passing, before Socrates' main speech in support of the lover. For instance, when Socrates' head is covered during his shameful first speech, he says, 'Then listen to me in silence; for truly the place seems filled with a divine presence; so do not be surprised if I often seem to be in a frenzy as my discourse progresses, for I am already almost uttering dithyrambics' (*Phaedrus* 238c-d).[46] The indication here is clearly that the divinities pervasive at the shrine are influencing Socrates' speech. Accordingly, when he completes the speech against the lover, as Phaedrus encourages him to continue, Socrates refuses, claiming, 'I shall surely be possessed of the nymphs to whom you purposely exposed me' (*Phaedrus* 241e). Here Socrates seems to fear outright possession.[47] One might wonder, of course, why the divinities would prompt Socrates to produce his initial speech *against* the lover? The role of madness (*μανία / mania*) in the relation of man and the divine is important in this context, because sometimes, just as we saw with Herakles, the gods make us do seemingly unethical things in order to bring about redemption—similar to the 'happy fault' of the Christian tradition. Hence, Socrates' first speech, while against the lover, is divinely orchestrated because it sets the parameters for redemption which is necessary in the philosophical pursuit of greater truth. There is a specific function to this madness (which Socrates will later explain) and the ultimate purpose is a good one, since Socrates will later purify himself via a speech that redeems him.

An important dimension to Socrates' engagement with the divinities of the shrine occurs at *Phaedrus* 242b-c. Here the assimilation involves the interplay between Socrates' *δαίμων* and the river. Socrates tells us, just after his first speech:

> My good friend, when I was about to cross the stream, the spirit and the sign that usually comes to me came—it always holds me back from something I am about to do—

[46] 'Frenzy' has also been translated as 'possessed,' by Hackforth. For discussion between the choices, see Corinne Ondine Pache, *A Moment's Ornament: The Poetics of Nympholepsy in Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 41.
[47] Cf. Larson, *Greek Nymphs*, 19.

Figure 43a: Roman Provincial Mosaic, from Zeugma, featuring Psyche and Eros, border containing many cornucopias and two heads of Acheloios. Image from Reddit, unknown source, but a faithful reproduction of a two-dimensional artwork.

Figure 43b: Early fourth-century BC votive relief from Megara, featuring a mask of Acheloios at the 'banquet of the gods,' now in the Antikensammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Inv. SK 679 (same object featured on the back cover). Image courtesy of Gary Todd via Flickr.

> and I thought I heard a voice from it which forbade my going away before clearing my conscience, as if I had committed some sin against deity.[48]

Note here that there is some holy force in the stream that indicates to Socrates' *δαίμων* that he is not to cross the river, for that would be a terrible violation. Given that Acheloios is the strength of rivers, this unmentioned but pervasive holy force would be none other than Acheloios. Interestingly, on a contemporaneous relief sculpture from nearby Megara we find support for this interpretation: Agathos Daimon is depicted holding a cornucopia, a part of Acheloios, as he (Acheloios) sits before him (Figure 43b).[49] On this piece we can see the general conceptual scheme laid out in which the individual *δαίμων*, like Agathos Daimon, possesses a portion of the larger deity—reflective of Finkelberg's thesis of individual and cosmic *νοῦς*. Thus, it is Socrates' *δαίμων* responding to the aquatic divinities inherent in water (and specifically, omnipresent Acheloios) that prompt the hesitation, and, indeed, similar to Pythagoras,[50] Socrates is communicating with the river.

Aside from the more esoteric passages, there are two unambiguous mentions of assimilation which occur after the speech in favor of the lover when the discussion turns to rhetoric and the notion of the philosopher as such.[51] In the first case, Socrates claims 'and I, Phaedrus, think the divinities of the place are the cause thereof; and perhaps too, the prophets of the Muses, who are singing above our heads, may have granted this boon to us by inspiration; at any rate, I possess no art of speaking.'[52] Later, at the very end of the dialogue, it is confirmed that the words spoken were not that of Socrates, but rather those of the nymphs, Acheloios' daughters. Specifically, he claims that Phaedrus must now go and tell Lysias and various others that they have 'heard words which they [the nymphs] told us to repeat...' (*Phaedrus* 278b-c). Clearly, the point here is that Socrates' speech concerning the lover, the soul, Beauty, and ultimate reality, was the product of an assimilation with the nymphs, which Socrates makes clear in these final lines. Thus, the philosophical truths presented in the dialogue concerning the lover and the philosopher have Acheloios and the nymphs as their source, and, perfectly consistent with the Acheloios tradition, assimilation is what enables all this to occur.

Ultimately, the description of Socrates' mental state and its external influences indicates Plato was very well aware of the notion of assimilation with aquatic deities, particularly Acheloios, and carefully weaved these descriptions into the dialogue in order to highlight the fundamentally important role of Acheloios in the soul's journey back to Being. This is certainly supported by the fact that Plato wrote the dialogue after his stay in Sicily (he even lodged with mercenaries),[53] where the nymphs or Herakles are often paired with local embodiments of Acheloios on contemporaneous coinage, sometimes in a specific psychopompic display: at Agyrion, Alaisa Katane, Alontion, Assoros, Herbessos, Katane (here psychopomp), Panormos (here psychopomp), and among the Kersini, the Mamar, and the Sergetaians.[54] Thus the mythos of Acheloios and his role as a liminal figure underlies the description of assimilation with divinity experienced by reclined Socrates, and it is through assimilation with Acheloios

[48] Trans. H. Fowler, *op.cit.*
[49] From Megara. See Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*, Vol. II, 1118, Figure 949.
[50] Aristotle, Fr. 109.
[51] I noticed two additional passing references to assimilation upon further reading, namely, at *Phaedrus* 261a and 279b.
[52] *Phaedrus* 262d: Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*
[53] Plato, *Seventh Letter,* gives the account.
[54] Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios*, 124-8, 131-4, 139-40, 144-8, 150-3.

that the philosophical discussion originates, in terms of both this dialogue and, as we will see in the coverage of allusions to Thales, in the history of philosophical activity.

Aquatic Language, Sirens, and Nymphs

There are many other general aquatic elements strewn throughout the dialogue that demonstrate the underlying role of Acheloios, also reflective of the notion of *ὕδωρ* as underlying principle. For instance, after Socrates' blasphemous speech against Love he insists: 'Now I, my friend, must purify myself; and for those who have sinned in matters of mythology there is an ancient purification....' (*Phaedrus* 243d).[55] In his recantation (the purification), he will 'wash out the brine from my ears with the water of sweet discourse' (*Phaedrus* 243d).[56] An important word in this respect is 'brine,' from *ἅλς*, the word for salt, but also the root of a word used for sea.[57] Thus, the purification involves unadulterated water, pure water (*ὕδωρ*), from the *ποταμοί.* Socrates therefore uses *ποτίμῳ*, to wash, and hence the relation to Acheloios, as the strength (*ἴς*) of the *ποταμοί* that enables the purifying power (here intellectual purification as opposed to the physical purification of Herakles). This removal of brine has interesting corollaries to our discussion of the etymology of *ὕδωρ* and the importance of Acheloios over Okeanos discussed above—Plato is perhaps alluding to the very controversy of supplanting Acheloios with Okeanos as another sin against deity, since we know the debate was fierce when Plato wrote (to judge from the *Derveni* author).[58] Indeed, Thales is even differentiated from the Okeanos tradition in the *Theaetetus*, discussed below. In any event, the purification is via a speech, but the language Socrates employs to discuss it is aquatic and specifically concerns fresh water, hence Acheloios, and that is another deliberate rhetorical maneuver.[59] Thus, it is through the figurative fresh water, a purifying agent, that this dialogue can continue and offer a glimpse of Being.

Another important employment of aquatic language occurs at *Phaedrus* 251a-b, in which Plato makes it a point to discuss how moisture emerging in response to beatific vision helps the wings of the soul emerge.

Phaedrus 251a-b:

> And as he looks upon him[the beloved], a reaction from his shuddering comes over him, with sweat and unwonted heat; for as the effluence of beauty enters him through the eyes, he is warmed; *the effluence moistens the germ of the feathers*, and as he grows warm, the parts from which the feathers grow, which were before hard and choked, and prevented the feathers from sprouting, become soft, and as *the nourishment streams upon*

[55] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*
[56] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.* Interestingly, there are a few ancient artworks that depict Acheloios with streams of water springing from his mouth, two from Sicily and one from Caria. The Sicilian pieces consist of the aforementioned vase from Akragas, and also a bronze coin from Alontion. The other coin comes from Mylasa, in Caria. Perhaps these pieces are somehow indicative of the special relation of speech to water. For the Carian coin, see Marc P. Wahl, Der wasserspeiende Flussgott von Hyllarima (?), in *Cista Mystica: Festschrift fuer Wolfgang Szaivert*, edited by Martin Baer, Wolfgang Fischer-Bossert, Nikolaus Schindel (Wien: VIN, 2020): 537-554.
[57] Cf. e.g., *Iliad* 9.214; 11.123; 17.455; 23.270, per Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of Homeric Dialect*, 23.
[58] Cf. Chapter 4, above.
[59] Even speech is enabled by the water clock (*κλεψύδρα / klepsýdra*). Hence Socrates informs us the *Theaetetus* that, 'water in its flow is bearing down on them.' (*Theatetus* 172d). Cf. Sallis, *The Figure of Nature: On Greek Origins*, 114f.

> *him*, the quills of the feathers swell and begin to grow from the roots over all the form of the soul; for it was once all feathered.[60]

The same notion is beautifully reinforced in other places in the dialogue.[61] With these passages Plato links the development of the soul to moisture, indeed sweat—just like Sophokles—and hence also Acheloios, as the water is seemingly positioned (here) as the corporeal counterpart to the incorporeal soul—water is somehow especially conducive to soul beyond other things.[62] Thus, while water is not equated with soul (as is the case with Hippo), as a source of abstraction it possesses an inherent purifying power in the intellectual realm, and at the very least allows access to philosophical knowledge concerning the soul in relation to Beauty—thus the reason for the dialogue's setting and aquatic language concerning the soul.

Other references to water include brief mention of the Sirens, Acheloios' daughters, when describing the cicadas: 'But if they see us conversing and sailing past them unmoved by the charm of their siren voices, perhaps they will be pleased and give us the gift which the gods bestowed on them to give to men' (*Phaedrus* 259a-b).[63] Likewise, the nymphs, also Acheloios' daughters, are mentioned again slightly later, 'Oh, how much more versed the nymphs, daughters of Achelous, and Pan, son of Hermes, are in the art of speech than Lysias, son of Cephalus!' (*Phaedrus* 263d).[64] The incorporation of the sirens and nymphs is a further reminder of the pervasiveness of Acheloios throughout the dialogue—they operate, like the river gods, as agents *of* Acheloios. This connection between Acheloios, his sinews, and his daughters, is often overlooked in scholarship because the mythos of Acheloios has been so obscured throughout history, and often times mention of the nymphs and local rivers is taken out of the broader Acheloian context.[65]

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[60] Trans. Harold Fowler, *op.cit.*

[61] '...then the fountain of that stream which Zeus, when he was in love with Ganymede, called 'desire' flows copiously upon the lover; and some of it flows into him, and some, when he is filled, overflows outside; and just as the wind or an echo rebounds from smooth, hard surfaces and returns whence it came, so the stream of beauty passes back into the beautiful one through the eyes, the natural inlet to the soul, where it reanimates the passages of the feathers, waters them and makes the feathers begin to grow, filling the soul of the loved one with love.' (*Phaedrus* 255b-d). 'Then when it gazes upon the beauty of the boy and receives the particles which flow thence to it (for which reason they are called yearning), *it is moistened and warmed*, ceases from its pain and is filled with joy...' (*Phaedrus* 251c-d).

[62] Cf. Porphyry, *De Antro* 10.8-11.1, referring to a lost work of Numenius (Fr. 30): 'We specifically also call the powers that preside over water "Naiad nymphs"; however, they also used to speak in general of all souls descending into genesis as Naiad nymphs. For they deemed that the souls settled on water, as being infused with the inspiration of the god, as Numenius says; because of this, he claims, the prophet also says that the spirit of God is born upon the water, and for this reason the Egyptians make all divine beings stand not on solid ground but all on a floating vessel, both the Sun and all the others. These should be understood to be the souls hovering over the moist element as they descend into genesis. And it is for this reason (Numenius says) that Heraclitus says that "it is enjoyment, not death, for souls to become moist," that is to say, falling into genesis is a delight for them, and that he (Heraclitus) also says elsewhere that "we live the death of them, and they live the death of us." For this reason, the poet (Homer) calls those in genesis "wet" because their souls are wet. For both blood and moist sperm are dear to them, just like the nourishment of the souls of plants is water.' Translation K. Nilüfer Akçay, *Porphyry's On the Cave of the Nymphs in its Intellectual Context*, Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, Volume 23 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 90-91.

[63] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.* Cf. e.g., Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.18, 1.63; Hyginus, *Fabulae Praefatio* 141; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 4.892ff; Lykophron, *Alexandria* 712ff. See also R. Taylor, *Ancient Naples: A Documentary History, Origins to c. 350 C.E.* (New York: Italica, 2021), 42ff.

[64] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*

[65] Cf. Daniel S. Werner, *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 22-3, 137, 140ff. He provides a truly excellent analysis of Plato's use of myth, but missed the Acheloios connection because the mythos of Acheloios has been largely forgotten.

Concerning the Banquet of the Gods

Arguably the most important allusion to Acheloios is the banquet of the gods ('a feast and a banquet' as Plato writes).[66] The cornucopia, wrenched from the head of Acheloios as the ultimate sacrifice, bears fruit, but not merely in the physical world in the form of crops (so regulated rivers), but also intellectual fruit (so ultimate knowledge). The banquet is a key concept in the dialogue.

Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247c-248c:

> For the colorless, formless, and intangible *οὐσια ὄντως οὖσα*, with which all true knowledge is concerned, holds this region and is visible only to the mind, the pilot of the soul. Now the divine intelligence, since it is nurtured on mind and pure knowledge, and the intelligence of every soul which is capable of receiving that which befits it, rejoices in seeing reality for a space of time and by gazing upon truth is nourished and made happy until the revolution brings it again to the same place. In the revolution it beholds absolute justice, temperance, and knowledge, not such knowledge as has a beginning and varies as it is associated with one or another of the things we call realities, but that which abides in the real eternal absolute; and in the same way it beholds and feeds upon the other eternal verities, after which, passing down again within the heaven, it goes home, and there the charioteer puts up the horses at the manger and feeds them with ambrosia and then gives them nectar to drink. Such is the life of the gods...[67]

While Plato makes no mention of Acheloios in this particular passage, he does include the aforementioned process of abstraction whereby one understands 'a general conception formed by collecting into unity by means of reason the many perceptions of the senses,' the very process induced by the abstraction from the local river (Ilisos) to Acheloios, thus 'lifting its [the soul's] vision above the things which we now say exist, [and] rose up into real being.'[68] But even more importantly, we are very fortunate to have an artifact dating to the time the *Phaedrus* was written, from nearby Megara (Figure 43b).[69] On the artifact we find an arrangement of gods with Zeus at the top. Flanking him on either side are Pan and, presumably, Kore.[70] To the side of Pan is Demeter, to the side of Kore, significantly, the aforementioned Agathos Daimon.[71] At the base of the scene we find Acheloios' daughter, the nymph Sithnides, and opposite her, her son, Megaros.[72] Most importantly, at the center of all this we find a banquet table, whereupon rests the mask of Acheloios! The sculpture from Megara is surely reflecting the same mythic tradition Plato draws from (in the dialogue, Socrates even says he will not leave Phaedrus if he extended his walk to Megara).[73] Indeed, such a banquet went beyond metaphor—recent

[66] *Phaedrus* 247b.
[67] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.* Here it seems that soul, as in Pythagoras and especially Empedokles, can become a god, which was argued to be a Thaletan concept.
[68] *Phaedrus* 249c.
[69] Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*, Vol. II, 1118, Figure 949.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] *Phaedrus* 228a. Another important piece of archaeological evidence concerns the coinage of Gela, where Acheloios is paired with a chariot above which flies a winged nymph, granting victory over death. The chariot is therefore not a military allusion, as many usually interpret such iconic devices. Instead, the chariot likely represents the soul. Cf. Figure 44.

Figure 44: Silver tetradrachm from Gela, Sicily, c. 480 BC. Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC. E-Auction 389, lot 29. Private collection.

excavations at caves around the mouth of the Achelous River have actually revealed that banquets were a regular part of the cultic worship in that region.[74] Ultimately, Thales' sacrifice of Acheloios and employment of *ὕδωρ*, upon which this whole banquet depends (for mankind, at the very least), is therefore essential: the intellectual sacrifice of Acheloios for *ὕδωρ* is a process that ultimately leads us back to Being itself—which is available only to *νοῦς*. The artwork therefore captures the absolutely central role of Acheloios at the banquet, and Plato uses this banquet in the dialogue to situate Thales as the first to break the horn of Acheloios and reveal the intellectual dimension to the myth. Indeed, Plato even gives us one of his many brilliant allusions to Thales and the well story in this very section:

> All my discourse so far has been about the fourth kind of madness, which causes him to be regarded as mad, who, when he sees the beauty on earth, remembering the true beauty, feels his wings growing and longs to stretch them for an upward flight, but cannot do so, and, like a bird, *gazes upward and neglects the things below* (*Phaedrus* 249e).[75]

But to truly see this connection between Acheloios and Thales in the *Phaedrus*, it is appropriate now to examine the various other allusions to Thales offered by Plato.

Allusions to Thales

Like Acheloios, careful observation reveals that Thales underlies the entire *Phaedrus* and is irrevocably linked to the mythos of Acheloios as a result, further solidifying the theory of influence advocated in Chapter 9. Although Plato never mentions Thales in the dialogue, in other dialogues he does, and when doing so uses specific descriptions and terminology that demonstrate several *Phaedrus* passages were about him, too. This phenomenon is fairly consistent with Plato's style. For instance, we witness a 'linking' of dialogues in the *Phaedo*, in which Plato's discussion presupposes a reading of the *Meno*.[76] Likewise, Plato references the

[74] Nagel, A river ran through it, 123-9.
[75] Cf. *Theaetetus* 174a-b: 'they say that Thales fell into a well while studying the stars and *gazing aloft*, and a witty and amusing Thracian servant-girl made fun of him because he was so keen to know about what was up in the sky but *failed to see what was in front of him* and next to his feet.'
[76] Richard Kraut, Plato, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition).

discussion in the *Republic* in the course of the *Timaeus*, with the understanding that one is aware of that earlier dialogue.[77] In the *Phaedrus* we experience similar rhetorical maneuvering, though admittedly more complex, since here two of the complementary dialogues were written after the *Phaedrus.* Specifically, in this section we'll see several passages that refer to Thales which are only made explicit (for the modern reader) when one reads the *Protagoras, Theaetetus,* and *Laws*—the *Theaetetus* and *Laws* written after the *Phaedrus*. The absence of Thales in the *Phaedrus,* as I'll show at the end of this section, is deliberate and related to the notion of what it means to be a philosopher.

I have been able to identify four basic themes that Plato uses in making these allusions, the first three concerning Thales' philosophical doctrines and the last, the notion of 'philosopher' *par excellance*: (1) self-knowledge and its relation to knowledge of the *ἀρχή*; (2) the idea that 'all things are full of gods;' (3) the discussion of motion in relation to the soul and the idea that soul is mixed with all things; and, finally, (4) the mostly pejorative comments concerning written words and notoriety in relation to the *σοφοί* (*sophoí*), and what this means concerning the understanding of the philosopher as such. All of these topics are inserted throughout the dialogue in reference to Thales and his tradition, and ultimately help shed light back on his philosophy before Aristotelian influence became so predominant in the narrative history of philosophy.

Knowledge of the Self and Knowledge of the Ἀρχή

It is in the *Protagoras* that Plato first tells us Thales inscribed (or helped inscribe) the very phrase 'know thyself' at Delphi: 'They [Thales and others] met together and dedicated the first fruits of their wisdom to Apollo in his temple at Delphi, inscribing there the sayings that everyone recites: 'Know Thyself' and 'Nothing in excess'.'[78] Because the *Protagoras* was written earlier than the *Phaedrus,* we can safely assume that Plato intends his audience to be familiar with the basic Thaletan characteristics documented in that earlier dialogue: someone concerned with self-knowledge and not concerned with producing written accounts. Moreover, since the *Phaedrus* is thoroughly embedded in a watery context, Thales' *ἀρχή* is also an underlying theme irrevocably connected to the dialogue's ultimate message. Accordingly, at the very outset of the *Phaedrus*, Plato links this idea of 'know thyself' directly to the *ἀρχή*.[79] This is evident when Socrates says, 'Dear Phaedrus, whither away, and where do you come from?' (*Phaedrus* 227a). Plato's word choice implicitly ties knowledge of the self as gateway to knowledge of the *ἀρχή* in the twofold sense of 'that from which all things originate and to which all things return.'[80] The dialogue thus begins with this simple question asked of an individual, but the topic of discussion is the progression of all things vis-à-vis Being—with particular importance

[77] Ibid.
[78] *Protagoras* 343a-b. Finkelberg, it seems to me, was correct in dismissing Guthrie's dichotomy, if we follow Plato's queue—there should really be no doubt that Thales was concerned with matters beyond a mere understanding of an 'impersonal cosmos,' and the inscription at Delphi attests to it.
[79] In a similar fashion Heidegger positions *Dasein* in relation to Being: 'Thus *fundamental ontology,* from which alone all other ontologies can originate, must be sought in the *existential analysis of Dasein.*' Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2010), 12. Heidegger missed the importance of Thales, largely due to the influence of Hegel and Nietzsche, surmising that Thales only proposed an ontic theory of what is.
[80] There is also the third sense of 'governing' implicit in Plato's word choice, for both *ποῖ* and *πόθεν* come from *πόθος*, 'a longing, yearning, fond desire.' Cf. LSV s.v. ΠΌΘΟΣ. This is an interesting avenue for future research given the connection between Acheloios and Aphrodite—what role does Aphrodite and Love play in the Thaletan conceptual scheme and how is that reflected in the later writings of Empedokles and Plato, specifically?

placed on the liminal role of water—hence we have a One/Many, or general/particular juxtaposition at the outset.[81] Here the point is that knowing oneself is intimately related to 'that from which one emerges and into which one returns,' the *ἀρχή*, and insofar as the theme of water is pervasive throughout the entire dialogue, the third characteristic of Thales' *ἀρχή* as underlying and governing principle is equally apparent as well. Therefore, the *ἀρχή* in its relation to the self, a primary concern for Thales, is immediately apparent in the very first line of the dialogue.

Consistent with this observation, perhaps the most obvious 'technical' allusions to Thales in the *Phaedrus* concern this very notion of self-knowledge. For instance, Socrates' statement in the beginning of the dialogue, before he sits to engage in a discussion that will reveal the nature of a philosopher, specifically discusses the question of self-knowledge in language that is closely linked to another dialogue that names Thales outright.

Phaedrus 230a:

> Socrates: I investigate not these things, but myself, to know *whether I am a monster more complicated and more furious than Typhon or a gentler and simpler creature*, to whom a divine and quiet lot is given by nature.[82]

Evidence that this description alludes to Thales comes from the *Theaetetus.* Compare the *Phaedrus* statement to Socrates' statement about Thales, below:

Theaetetus 174a-b:

> Socrates: For example, Theodorus, they say that Thales fell into a well while studying the stars and *gazing aloft*, and a witty and amusing Thracian servant-girl made fun of him because he was so keen to know about what was up in the sky but failed to see what was in front of him and next to his feet. The same joke holds for everyone who spends his life in philosophy. It really is true that a person like that fails to notice the person next to him or his neighbor; not only does he not notice what he is doing, he *barely knows whether he is a human being or some other kind of creature.*[83]

Accordingly, back in *Phaedrus* 249d-e, we find again an allusion to this very same story from the *Theaetetus* concerning the original philosopher:

> Now a man who employs such memories rightly is always being initiated into perfect mysteries and he alone becomes truly perfect; but since he separates himself from human interests and turns his attention toward the divine, *he is rebuked by the vulgar*, who consider him mad and do not know that he is inspired. All my discourse so far has been about the fourth kind of madness, which causes him to be regarded as mad, who, when he sees the beauty on earth, remembering the true beauty, feels his wings

[81] For the 'reservoir' monism, in which things emerge from and return to the ultimate principle, see Barney, History and Dialectic in *Metaphysics* A3, 81.
[82] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*
[83] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*

> growing and longs to stretch them for an upward flight, but cannot do so, and, like a bird, *gazes upward and neglects the things below*.[84]

Thus, twice in the *Phaedrus* we have allusions to Thales and these are confirmed by the passage from the *Theaetetus,* which combines both accounts (man vs. monster juxtaposition from *Phaedrus* 230a and the well story alluded to in *Phaedrus* 249d-e) and names Thales outright. Plato, of course, is our first record of the well story,[85] and was therefore instrumental in characterizing the philosopher this way. But most importantly, in doing so he also solidified the *Phaedrus* passages as references to Thales—surely he was aware of the overlap when he penned the *Theaetetus*. Therefore, the allusions in the *Phaedrus* concerning self-knowledge are to Thales, the more overt *Theaetetus* coming just one year after the *Phaedrus.*

This interpretation, in which knowledge of the true self is a primary concern for Thales, is reinforced by the fact that, in the *Theaetetus,* we have Thales clearly differentiated from the philosophers listed in the 'Homeric' tradition of Okeanos, who do-away with the static self (with the implication that the earlier *Phaedrus,* which discusses Acheloios as opposed to Okeanos, concerns Thales). The other thinkers are Protagoras, Heraclitus, and Empedokles, the later of whom Plato directly associated with the 'classically' transmitted Homeric tradition in which Okeanos is the origin of even the gods (cf. *Theaetetus* 152d-e and 160d-e).[86] In this 'classic' account, everything is reduced to an 'offspring of flow and motion' and therefore there is no absolute being underlying things (much like Marxian dialectical materialism). Thales is mentioned nowhere in this first account, which is a summary of Protagoras' teachings. The discussion turns to disputing Protagoras (*Theaetetus* 169d-171b) and his idea that perception is knowledge, and we find mention of Thales shortly thereafter. He is brought up, not as one among the 'Protagorean' philosophers, but rather as one of Socrates' 'band,' the truly wise. Thales is clearly positioned as one of the 'leaders' of this more dignified group—a man concerned with real eternal absolutes as opposed to the common concerns of the *σοφοί* listed in the earlier account. It is for this reason that Thales is the very first name mentioned, for it was his engagement with the Acheloios tradition, which induces an abstraction to more fundamental reality (as seen in the last section on Acheloios), that separates him from the Protagoreans.

Ultimately, Plato alludes to Thales with these references to self-knowledge and specifically how they are related to knowledge of the *ἀρχή*. Knowing oneself is a matter of knowing where one originated and where one is headed, and water plays an absolutely fundamental role as underlying and governing agent in this process of self-appropriation insofar as it helps lead from the particulars to the general—a Thaletan insight.

All Things are Full of Gods

The idea that 'all things are full of gods' is another pervasive theme in the dialogue. Aside from the numerous descriptions of assimilation in relation to the sinews of Acheloios listed

[84] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*
[85] For discussion, see Blumenberg, *The Laughter of the Thracian Woman: A Protohistory of Theory,* 5ff. The only other well story coming from Aesop, Thales' contemporary, and in that case it made no mention of Thales.
[86] This should not be construed to mean that Empedokles was not influenced by Thales and Pythagoras, as demonstrated in Chapter 10, but rather that Empedokles' philosophy assumed its own character and structure.

above, which unquestionably express this idea (and particularly in reference to water deities), there are other important pieces of evidence to consider. Of course, *πάντα πλήρα Θεῶν εἶναι* is attributed directly to Thales by Aristotle.[87] But Plato, in fact, employs a near-identical phrase, and although leaving it unattributed, it surely refers to Thales as well:

Laws X 899b:

> A soul or souls—and perfectly virtuous souls at that—have been shown to be the cause of all these phenomena, and whether it is by their living presence in matter that they direct all the heavens, or by some other means, we shall insist that these souls are gods. Can anybody admit all this and still put up with people who deny that 'everything is full of gods'?

In this same work there is a critique of materialism (cf. *Laws* X, 886e) with no mention of Thales (or water).[88] Turning to the *Phaedrus,* we find the very same sentiment, namely, that the gods are the cause of natural phenomena much like they are present in matter. This is expressed in the myth of Boreas and Oreithyia.

Plato, *Phaedrus* 229d-e:

> Socrates: But I, Phaedrus, think such explanations [natural explanations] are very pretty in general, but are the inventions of a very clever and laborious and not altogether enviable man, for no other reason than because after this he must explain the forms of the Centaurs, and then that of the Chimaera, and there presses in upon him a whole crowd of such creatures, Gorgons and Pegas, and multitudes of strange, inconceivable, portentous natures. If anyone disbelieves in these, and with a rustic sort of wisdom, undertakes to explain each in accordance with probability, he will need a great deal of leisure.

Just after this exposition Socrates claims he has no leisure for such explanations because he does not yet know himself, 'as the Delphic inscription has it,' (*Phaedrus* 229e) which, again, we know was inscribed by Thales[89]—a proposition Thales claimed was truly difficult.[90] Thus, because we can be certain from Plato's other works that Thales was not a strict materialist, that he believed 'all things are full of gods,' and that he helped inscribe the Delphic phrase, Plato is clearly referring to Thales' philosophy in these passages.[91] For Thales would surely hold the same critique that Socrates expresses, since he was not irreligious and did not abandon belief in deities but claimed instead that they were pervasive.[92]

[87] Aristotle, *De anima* 1.5.411a7-8 (DK 11 A 22=Th 32).
[88] Cf. also Plato, *Epinomis* 988b.
[89] *Protagoras* 343a-b.
[90] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.22-44, 151-152.
[91] This interpretation may give us good reason to doubt the attribution of the theory of the Estian winds (northwest winds) to Thales. In Herodotus' account (*Histories,* 2.20) he never mentions Thales. It is later authors, starting with Diodorus Siculus some 400 years later, that we find the belief attributed to Thales. Why would Herodotus not have mentioned Thales? He attributes other things directly to him (cf. *Histories,* 1.74).
[92] For Thales' belief in gods, see also Thomson, *The First Philosophers,* 156ff; Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy,* 62; Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 80.

But wouldn't this conflation of gods and souls (as it appears in *Laws*) discount our argument in Chapter 3, in which we suggested that 'gods' refers to water, not soul? Not really, and for two reasons. First, Plato might be extrapolating from Thales' original teachings in this late dialogue and present us with a more nuanced view of the cosmos, especially since he is referring to immaterial soul in its difference from matter, a truly refined concept that likely post-dates Thales. Second, in Pinto's reading (cf. Chpt. 3) the gods can have soul, as can water, so an aquatic deity in the Thaletan scheme most certainly would be construed as a perfectly virtuous soul *and* a god (hence, these souls are gods, meaning these specific souls—Wright's *ὁ εὐδαιμονέστατος θεός* and Plato's *θεῶν γένος εὐδαιμόνων*).[93] Hence, when Socrates describes the journey of certain souls as they catch a glimpse of the world of forms, he claims: 'Such is the life of the gods.'[94] But this doesn't mean we are licensed to make a blanket equating of soul and gods. In any case, Socrates' description of the undesirable idea of a strict materialism in the *Phaedrus* surely alludes to Thales and is, at the very least, indicative of a much more nuanced Thaletan world in which divine water is the *ἀρχή* and as such it is full of gods—and such gods naturally possess soul and are perfectly virtuous souls.

At the end of the dialogue, we find once again the idea that 'all things are full of gods,' here with recourse to Pan, god of wild nature, and all other divinities present at the shrine.

Plato, *Phaedrus* 279b-c:

> Socrates: O beloved Pan and all ye other gods of this place, grant to me that I be made beautiful in my soul within, and that all external possessions be in harmony with my inner man. May I consider the wise man rich; and may I have such wealth as only the self-restrained man can bear or endure.—Do we need anything more, Phaedrus? For me that prayer is enough.[95]

The fact that the surroundings are thoroughly infused with gods and the individual soul seeks to be in harmony with the cosmos attests to this earlier maxim of Thales and reinforces the above connection between *ἀρχή* and self-knowledge—also seemingly attributed to Thales by Plato. Socrates is concerned specifically with the soul in relation to nature as thoroughly infused with divinity, just as was Thales.

Motion and the Soul

Another clear indication that Plato had Thales in mind throughout the dialogue is the idea of motion in relation to the soul. The idea of the soul as source of motion is one of the few early philosophical maxims attributed to Thales, which Aristotle recounts, 'Thales, too, to judge from what is reported, seems to have held that the soul causes motion'(*De anima* 1.2.405a19-20).[96] If it is indeed accurate to attach this belief to Thales (I see no good reason to doubt it), surely Plato alludes to it here:

[93] Cf. *Phaedrus* 247a.
[94] *Phaedrus* 248a.
[95] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.* If our reading of the *Phaedrus* as indicative of Thales holds true, we might also have evidence in this passage of Thales' concern with economics and his ideal of the good state, in which no citizen is too rich or too poor.
[96] Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*

Plato, *Phaedrus* 245c-246a:

> Socrates: Every soul is immortal. For that which is *ever moving* is immortal but that which moves something else or is moved by something else, when it ceases to move, ceases to live. Only that which moves itself, since it does not leave itself, never ceases to move, and this is also the source and beginning of motion for all other things which have motion.

Likewise, the idea that the soul is mixed with all things is also alluded to in the dialogue, strengthening the connection of the dialogue to Thales. Aristotle again attributes the phrase to Thales when he says, 'Some say it [soul] is intermingled in the universe...'[97] Consider that passage in light of the following.

Plato, *Phaedrus* 246b-d:

> Now we must try to tell why a living being is called mortal or immortal. Soul, *considered collectively*, has the care of all that which is soulless, and it traverses the whole heaven, appearing sometimes in one form and sometimes in another; now when it is perfect and fully winged, it mounts upward and governs the whole world.[98](emphasis added)

In these passages we therefore have two philosophical ideas safely attributed to Thales: that the soul is the cause of motion, and that soul is intermingled with the universe. Certainly Plato was aware that Thales held this view when he wrote the dialogue, so he must have been deliberate in including it. But there is more—Socrates also includes discussion of the *ἀρχή* in the very same section of the text, which is perfectly consistent with the dialogue's positioning of self-knowledge and *ἀρχή* as intimately related. He says, specifically, that everything generated must be generated from a beginning (*ἀρχῆς*), and this beginning must be ungenerated and indestructible (245d). This reading concerning soul in relation to *ἀρχή* adds further support to Finkelberg's Thaletan conceptual scheme, in which individual *νοῦς* is part of the cosmic *νοῦς*, since Plato distinguishes soul which *can be* considered collectively (hence not an entirely pure panpsychism). As we discussed in Chapter 3, distancing ourselves from strict material monism suggests we ought to distance ourselves from unqualified panpsychism as well, and Plato's word choice supports this differentiation in relation to Thales. Thales' view must have contained much more subtlety and was far less simplistic, hence his differentiation from Hippo. Ultimately, then, Plato incorporates the discussion of an all-pervasive soul and the notion of soul as the source of motion as an allusion to Thales, and confirms the attribution of such beliefs to Thales by Aristotle.

Concerning Writing and Notoriety

So why doesn't Plato just discuss Thales openly? The answer comes in the discussion of writing and notoriety. In the *Protagoras*, the idea that a philosopher corresponds to someone that can produce wise sayings, i.e. speak with knowledge of the truth, is an important topic. Plato writes, mentioning Thales in particular:

[97] I disagree with Aristotle's assessment that unilaterally conflates 'soul' and 'gods' into a form of panpsychism, following Pinto, 'All Things Are Full of Gods': Soul and Gods in Thales, *passim*.
[98] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*

> Both now and in the past some people have understood that being a Laconian is much more a matter of being devoted to philosophy than to physical training. They know that *to be able to produce sayings* like that is the mark of a perfectly educated person. These have included Thales of Miletus... (*Protagoras* 342eff).[99]

Here we see that the philosopher, and in particular Thales, is characterized not by his writings but by an unwritten tradition, which helps frame the following passages.[100] In the *Phaedrus* writing is first disparaged when Phaedrus says, 'He seemed to believe, Socrates; and you know yourself that the most influential and important men in our cities are ashamed to write speeches and leave writings behind them, through fear of being called sophists by posterity'(*Phaedrus* 257d).[101] This sentiment is reinforced, of course, in the famous story of Theuth and Thamus (*Phaedrus* 274c-275b). While always striking commentators as peculiar, the story of Theuth and Thamus makes terrific sense if the entire dialogue alludes to the spoken (unwritten) tradition stemming from the first philosopher. As the story goes, Theuth was a god of innovation, constantly inventing various things which he would bring to the divine king, Thamus, to judge. Proud of his newest invention, writing, he presented it to Thamus and said, 'This invention, O king...will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories.'[102] But Thamus saw that the invention would not do that, for he said in response the following lines:

> Most ingenious Theuth...this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practice their memory...You have invented not an elixir of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise, but only appear wise.[103]

Cleary, the story offers a special description of the dangers inherent in the written word and in effect we have a promotion of the spoken tradition, which Plato connected directly to Thales in the *Protagoras.* Additionally, Socrates tells us that, not only was Theuth from Naukratis, but that he invented geometry (*Phaedrus* 244c-d), which we know Thales is said to have introduced to the Greeks from the Egyptians,[104] thus another connection of the dialogue to Thales.

Interestingly, this notion of an unwritten tradition seems to be again rather cleverly related to Thales in a passage appearing just after the Theuth and Thamus story:

Plato, *Phaedrus* 276b:

[99] Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[100] For the idea that Thales was specifically concerned with notoriety and this is the impetus behind the first philosophical cosmology, see Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning,* 17. This is an area in which I mostly disagree with Panchenko. Thales was human, of course, and I'm sure the appeal of notoriety for his wisdom crossed his mind at some stage—but I do not believe this was the primary motivating factor.
[101] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Hero, *Definitiones* 136.1 (Th 92); Apuleius of Madaura, *Florida* 18.17-18 (Th 177); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 1.24 (Th 237); Proclus Diadochus, *In primum Euclidis Elementorum librum commentarium Prologus* 2.65.3-11 (Th 380).

> Would he not, when he was in earnest, follow the rules of husbandry, plant his seeds in fitting ground, and be pleased when those which he had sowed reached their perfection in the eighth month?[105]

The analogy of the gardener seems particularly apt, for we know that Thales made a fortune off of his knowledge of crop cycles. Indeed, Plato uses 'eight months' and one cannot help but connect this to Aristotle, *Politics* 1259a5-10. There it says that Thales purchased the olive presses while it was winter and rented them at the time of the harvest. Either February through October or March through November (both winter to harvest)[106] would give us exactly eight months, but eight months would not correspond to a normal planting cycle for harvesting crops, which can only be planted after the threat of frost has passed.[107] This horticultural fact indicates that Plato is alluding to something or someone in particular, which seems to be, given the forgoing analysis, Thales once again.[108] Thus, the story of Thamus and this subsequent passage about husbandry are Plato's way of acknowledging why he does not mention Thales outright—Thales is like a good gardener and unlike the sophists specifically because he is not concerned with notoriety but instead, planted the moist seed of dualism that would only emerge later, in Plato's dialogues. Indeed, just as the sacrifice of Acheloios was necessary for the mind to progress toward being, so Thales, as a particular of the general, is sacrificed in his rejection of sophistry—the *ἀρχή* and the self being intimately conjoined, as Plato expressed in the very opening stanza of the dialogue. Thus, the rather abrupt turn in the dialogue to rhetoric, when seen through a Thaletan lens, is therefore perfectly appropriate. Thales is the good gardener, who in rejecting sophism planted a seed that produced great abundance in subsequent generations—particularly Pythagoras and Plato.[109]

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[105] Ibid.

[106] Although our calendar does not match that of the Athenians, they did employ both 30 and 29 day months, so the observation is sound.

[107] While the threat of frost is virtually non-existent in Athens (but not all of Attica), that is not true for the rest of Greece, particularly as we move away from the coast, where frost can last until early April. In Chios, where Thales rented the olive presses, the threat of frost is not gone until early March.

[108] Two other allusions to the moral of the olive crop story might come in the remarks about philosophical discourse being more important than business—cf. *Phaedrus* 227b and 228d.

[109] For a convincing analysis of Aristotle's coverage of Pythagoreanism in its difference from the Milesian 'materialists,' and in its similarity with Platonism, see Malcolm Schofield, Pythagoreanism: emerging from the Presocratic fog, in *Aristotle's Metaphysics Alpha,* edited by Carlos Steel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 141-166. He surmised that the Pythagoreans were not quite dualists because of 'the confusion of thinking that if a predicate applies to some subject in the first instance, that subject must provide the specification of its essence. In other words, when we refer to something as one or unlimited, it is not that something—the referent—that is the substance, but the one or the unlimited....As with Platonists, this is a sort of "separation" of what is predicated from what it is predicated of. But unlike Platonists, the Pythagoreans do not assign one and unlimited (or One and Unlimited) to an intelligible domain distinct from the sensible world. Rather, they take them...to be fundamental realities in nature.' (to which I'll add, much like Acheloios is never separated from his sinews). Ibid., 165-6.

A Neo-Platonic dimension to the later cult of Acheloios might be gleaned from Philostratus the Elder's *Imagines.* In his section concerning a wall painting from Pompei that features Narcissus, Philostratus mentions that Narcissus sits in a cave sacred to Acheloios and the nymphs (Philostratus, *Imagines* 1.23). He then goes on to describe Narcissus' predicament: the youth has come to rest and found a pool of water, wherein he sees himself and falls in love, thinking the reflection is a real being and forgetting about his true self: 'As for you, however, Narcissus, it is no painting that has deceived you...but you do not realize that the water represents you exactly as you are when you gaze upon it, nor do you see through the artifice of the pool, though to do so you have only to nod your head or change your expression or slightly move your hand, instead of standing in the same attitude; but acting as though you had met a companion, you wait for some move on his part. Do you expect the pool to enter a conversation with you? Nay, this youth does not hear anything we say, but he is immersed, eyes and ears alike, in the water and we must interpret the paining ourselves.' (Trans. A. Fairbanks, from *Elder Philostratus, Younger Philostratus, Callistratus,* Loeb Classical Library 256, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931). The idea of a man stuck in a cave, unable to move and identifying a reflection as

Ultimately, Socrates gives his definition of a philosopher using the idea of beatific vision, and here we have the final allusion to Thales as the prototype. In this passage, writing yet again possesses no independent value and any value it does have comes only from the authoritative figure who can demonstrate his knowledge via speech.

Plato, *Phaedrus* 277e-278d:

> Socrates: We have amused ourselves with talk about words long enough. Go and tell Lysias that you and I came down to the fountain and sacred place of the nymphs, and heard words which they told us to repeat to Lysias and anyone else who composed speeches, and to Homer or any other who has composed poetry with or without musical accompaniment, and third to Solon and whoever has written political compositions which he calls laws: If he has composed his writings with *knowledge of the truth*, and is able to support them by discussion of that which he has written, and has the power to show by his own speech that the written words are of little worth, such a man ought not to derive his title from such writings, but from the serious pursuit which underlies them.
>
> Phaedrus: What titles do you grant them then?
>
> Socrates: I think, Phaedrus, that the epithet 'wise' is too great and befits God alone; but the name 'philosopher,' that is, 'lover of wisdom,' or something of the sort would be more fitting and modest for such a man.[110]

The words Phaedrus is instructed to share emerge directly from the fountain and the nymphs, and Thales is noticeably absent from the list of those to inform. But more significantly, this passage seems to allude to the underlying message in yet another Thaletan story—the story of the golden tripod.[111] In that well-known story, the oracle said, 'Who is first of all in wisdom? I proclaim the tripod to be his.'[112] After refusing the gift twice, thereby proclaiming the title of first in wisdom did not belong to him, Thales dedicated it to Didymean Apollo. Hence, just as Plato says, the term 'wise' is not appropriate for a man, but befits God alone, and this sentiment stems from Thales himself, the first 'philosopher,' who claimed not wisdom but demonstrated a love of wisdom in offering the golden tripod to a deity. Is there really any good reason to doubt that the *Phaedrus* is about Thales? Seemingly all of Thales' philosophy is contained in the dialogue, which takes place at a shrine to Acheloios, and, with the exception of Thales' theory of motion, the authenticity of which is not really disputed, all of the allusions find support in other dialogues that name Thales' outright when dealing with the same topics.

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something fundamentally real is obviously Platonic, as is the idea that some element of desire is what keeps Narcissus trapped in place. As a result, it appears Philostratus' inclusion of Acheloios and the nymphs is not simply an artistic embellishment (none of the extant paintings actually feature Acheloios), but is instead indicative of the importance of Acheloios to Plato's worldview, which Philostratus incorporated into his description.

[110] Trans. Fowler, *op.cit.*

[111] First mentioned by Callimachus, in the late fourth, early third century BC, Cf. Callimachus, *Iambus* 1.52-77 (Th 52).

[112] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.28ff. Trans. McKirahan, *op.cit.*

Acheloios as the Horizon for an Understanding of Being

It will now be useful to summarize the main points of this chapter, since it offers a wholly new lens for reading the *Phaedrus*. The dialogue was clearly influenced by Italian and Sicilian traditions of the first half of the fourth century, where Acheloios was one of the most widely-regarded deities (if not the most), especially among the very mercenaries Plato stayed with. There are statues from the very location where the dialogue is said to have taken place, a microcosm of Dodona that is sacred to Acheloios, that feature Acheloios as the physical throne of Zeus, the place from which he [Zeus] operates in relation to man and leads his procession of the gods and souls to the vision of Being. In fact, this very scene, the banquet of the gods, is represented on a votive object from Megara, a place which Socrates even mentions in the dialogue. Accordingly, although he is only mentioned twice, there are numerous allusions to Acheloios throughout the dialogue—both in the form of overt aquatic terminology and also more subtle references that require background knowledge of the Acheloios tradition (e.g., the notion of assimilation and relation to Dodona). But most importantly of all, Acheloios is positioned as an initial source of abstraction conducive to philosophy—it is through the sacrifice of Acheloios and the related abstraction that the banquet can occur and we all progress toward Being. In terms of Thales, although he is not mentioned in the dialogue at all, this absence is a deliberate rhetorical strategy and there are numerous, unmistakable references to him: the idea that only gods are wise is a reference to the moral of the tripod story; the idea that 'all things are full of gods' is a pervasive theme that stems from Thales; the discussion of motion in relation to the soul and the idea that the soul is mixed with all things is likewise Thaletan; the emphasis on the importance of an unwritten tradition surely refers to the Thaletan tradition, and, finally, the description of the philosopher as one concerned with knowing oneself is a phrase even attributed to Thales elsewhere by Plato. Ultimately, all of this evidence suggests that the *Phaedrus* should be read with the Acheloios tradition in mind, and likewise, Thales' encounter with that tradition. Thus, Plato confirms that the initial abstraction from Acheloios precipitated the very emergence of philosophy with Thales, in which he posited *ὕδωρ* as the One among the Many in sacrificing Acheloios, and the sacrifice is necessary insofar as the ultimate beatific vision is accessibly only to *νοῦς* (cf. *Phaedo* 247c). Plato therefore positions Acheloios as the horizon for an understanding of Being in the following manner: It was Thales' removal of the name Acheloios from the underlying tradition, via an abstraction prompted by that very tradition, and the subsequent substitution of *ὕδωρ* that signified the movement that would lead, after hundreds of years of philosophical discourse, to incorporeal Being. This is why we find the head of Acheloios on the table at the banquet of the gods, for philosophy begins with the sacrifice of Acheloios, and even Zeus feasts on his fruits.

Conclusion

The Sacrifice of Acheloios: A Response to the Neo-Marxians

'We must look for a way to illuminate the fundamental ontological question and follow it.'

-Heidegger[1]

The Ultimate Concern

How exactly is the sacrifice of Acheloios related to the origin of philosophy, and how does that relation offer a way out of the Marxian tragedy? That is the fundamental question that will occupy the conclusion of this book. In the beginning of this work, we saw that for Marx, all ideologies and values are delusional phantasms that necessarily accompany the exchange of commodities, and are ultimately caused by the universally-held[2] notion of human labor in the abstract. With the advent of coinage in the archaic Greek world this phenomenon purportedly reaches a new level of sophistication—the value of money as a universal means of exchange is reflected by a 'false consciousness' back onto the world in the form of Presocratic metaphysics, which Thomson sees as confirmation of Marx's original observations concerning the 'real' source of all the values we hold dear. Indeed, slightly later, Sohn-Rethel will insist that the process of exchange-abstraction in particular, emerging from the use of coins as 'abstract things,' was the key factor allowing the Presocratics to impose universal frameworks (and values) onto the world. In this case the exchange of coins allegedly altered the physical brain in such a way as to unleash philosophical activity, whatever the exact neuro-physiological details. Finally, in its most recent iteration, Seaford provided literary and archaeological evidence supporting the pivotal importance of the exchange of coined money to the advent of philosophy and genesis of the 'Western Subject,' based largely on his coinage-*ἄπειρον* parallel. Here he determined that a causal relation between coins and philosophy must be the case since only Greek society was monetized, whereas all other potential sources of influence on philosophy are found in various ancient cultures. He therefore argued, as we saw, that the advent of coinage caused the phenomenon of 'metaphysical cosmology,' the Greeks being the first to conceive of the universe as an impersonal system by projecting the idea of ideal substance onto the cosmos; and likewise, through the introjection of the abstract value of money, false consciousness is born.

But this characterization raises an important question: Is philosophy, even in its initial stage, reducible to some form of impersonal, metaphysical cosmology? In saying it is, we are seemingly limiting the character and structure of philosophy itself to a particular hermeneutic approach to the *ἀρχή*—a bold and downright dangerous move. Ultimately, this conflation, similar to O'Grady's conflation of *ἀρχή* and *φύσις*, is the root of the problem with the Neo-Marxian account. It is problematic because it rests on the idea that Thales was a

[1] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 414. Trans. Stambaugh, *op.cit.*
[2] In commodity producing societies, that is.

strict material monist, which is demonstrably false, and this idea of 'water' as constitutive cause then provides the basis for ultimately justifying the following: ideologies and values, including but certainly not limited to those espoused by the Presocratics, never correspond to fundamentally real transcendental parameters, but are rather delusional constructs of the conscious mind, which, again, is itself merely 'false consciousness.' These ramifications—the elimination of all transcendental reality and with it, the self—constitute the ultimate concern, and it all stems from a thorough misunderstanding of Thales.

The Problem Situation

To properly move away from the Neo-Marxian idea of philosophy it is necessary to revisit the notion of the 'problem situation' operative at the origin of philosophy. What was the conscious problem involved in the emergence of philosophy, if philosophy was not primarily caused by unconscious social motivators?[3] O'Grady thought it was, 'If the gods are not the all-powerful beings most people believe them to be, what is it that brings about change, and what is the universe made of?'[4] This, it was argued, assumes Thales operated from a demythologized cognitive framework before establishing that very framework, and also that Thales rejected the gods and traditional theories of his society. For Panchenko, Thales' problem situation concerned the attempt, clearly articulated later by Anaximander and Xenophanes, to determine the true (divine) origin, 'that from which all things emerged and into which all things return,' in a convincing way, and this was done for the purpose of achieving notoriety. But this question also puts the cart before the horse, because it assumes Thales was in search of a candidate to fill the position of *ἀρχή*—an empty concept seemingly emerging *ex nihilo*, creating a void the Neo-Marxians stuff with money. In the words of Neil Postman, 'The form of a question may even block us from seeing solutions to problems that become visible through a different question.'[5]

So what was the problem situation? Based on the evidence presented in this work, we know for a fact that Thales was born into a world in which religion, mythology, and superstition were utterly pervasive.[6] He was from a seemingly dignified and well-to-do family, probably of Phoenician or Cadmian[7] origin, and was unquestionably well educated. Thales was also certainly aware of the prevailing mythological narratives, religious beliefs, and cultic practices of his fellow Milesians—he was a Sage and highly respected citizen, after all. Moreover, because he was a traveler and Miletos itself was exposed to various cultures via trade and other avenues, he would undoubtedly have been exposed to many other belief systems, especially those coming from the Levant and North Syria (Yahweh), the Near East (Apsu), Egypt (Nūn), and perhaps Attica (Okeanos). Even in his home city, there were multiple deities sharing an underlying aquatic nature (Acheloios, Aphrodite, and Poseidon). When encountering aquatic myths that exhibited the same fundamental characteristics—originating, underlying, perhaps also governing and final—Thales would surely have noticed the similarities with his hometown

[3] Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning*, 7, argues, following Popper, that theories emerge from problem situations.
[4] O'Grady, *Thales of Miletus,* 1.
[5] Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 126.
[6] Blumenberg thus claims the world might have been oversaturated with divinities and Thales, in saying 'all things are full of gods,' meant that gods were superfluous. Blumenberg, *The Laughter of the Thracian Woman,* viii. See my commentary on the piety of Thales in Chapter 7.
[7] Boeotians of Phoenician decent.

or ancestral version, Acheloios. It is this overlap among the various originating watery deities that would cause him to wonder,[8] in a similar vein to what Popper and von Fritz originally proposed concerning the clash of cultures in the Archaic Mediterranean. Wondering about these religious and mythological intersections is therefore the most appealing candidate for the underlying impetus, or 'problem situation,' operative at the beginning of philosophy—Thales was speculating about the ultimate status of the various aquatic divinities he encountered: Which was true? Later, presumably something like: What does the commonality reveal about reality? It is from this initial source of wondering about watery gods that he appears to have formulated a universal theory that incorporated all of these figures in his philosophy of divine water and idea that all things are full of gods.

While all this is, admittedly, conjecture, when we look at the specific role of Acheloios in this process the truth reveals itself. How exactly does Acheloios play into this whole business? What is it about Acheloios, specifically, that contributed to the birth of philosophy? It is now time to see that the curiosity surrounding the multiplicity of deities was resolved through the sacrifice of Acheloios, an ancient tradition that prompts abstraction from the particulars to the general in its basic *λόγος*, and also, through *μῦθος*, positions Acheloios as the sacrifice necessary for philosophical activity—including but not limited to metaphysical cosmology. Indeed, there is even a coin, the Badge of Thales, that features the very deed (*ἔργον*) of Acheloios in which he reveals his essence as divine water—an essence shared by all the aforementioned aquatic divinities.[9] In the end, it should be clear that Thales was a lover of wisdom precisely because he beheld multiple ways of assessing and discussing the world in advocating *ὕδωρ* was the *ἀρχή* and maintaining that all things are full of gods, a notion which was inclusive of the very gods of myth. This was the ultimate lesson in the *Phaedrus*—what it really means to love wisdom—and it all stems from beatific vision, not coined money.

The λόγος, μῦθος, And ἔργον Of Acheloios

The λόγος of Acheloios

Even though we have seen similarities between the Acheloios tradition and Thales' *ἀρχή*, how do we know that Acheloios was a suitable source of abstraction? It seems there were two ways, already sketched in Chapter 9, corresponding to the *λόγος* of Acheloios in particular. What I mean by *λόγος* is the account of Acheloios—the words themselves and their meanings, that promoted abstraction in the mind toward ideologies and general principles. The Greek term *ἴς* is the first major component to this *λόγος*. We saw that in Homeric times, the word *ἴς* already had a double meaning based on homophonic and resultant semantic overlaps, precisely what D'Alessio commented on in his study of *P.Derveni* and other texts as they relate to Acheloios.[10] When we see a form of *ἴς* (so, e.g., *ἶνας*) before Acheloios, it means 'sinew,' as in, the rivers of the world are the 'sinews of Acheloios.' But at the same time Acheloios is the strength (*ἴς*) of rivers—essentially, that divine aspect which is responsible for motion (among other things, like the repulsion of evil, presumably). Hence in Pindar it operated exactly this way, and in

[8] Wonder being that activity which Aristotle places at the beginning of philosophy, and Plato makes a fundamental activity of the soul. For Plato, see *Phaedrus* 254c. For Aristotle, see *Metaphysics* 982b13-14.
[9] John Sallis was the first to discuss the notion of 'mirror play' in the Platonic dialogues and how such mirror play is exhibited through *μῦθος*, *λόγος*, and *ἔργον*. For discussion, see Bernard Freydberg, *The Thought of John Sallis: Phenomenology, Plato, Imagination* (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 64f.
[10] D'Alessio, Textual Fluctuations and Cosmic Streams, *passim.*

Homer we even find *ἴς ποταμοῖο*, 'the mighty river.'[11] This strength/sinew fusion inherent in the *λόγος* of Acheloios is conducive to an abstraction from the particulars to the general, and is a better fit than coinage for explaining the impetus behind the abstraction underlying the idea that *ὕδωρ* is the *ἀρχή*. It is better precisely because it involves divine water, the basis of Thales' philosophical enterprise.

The importance of locative epithets in Greek religion is the second element of the *λόγος* of Acheloios conducive to abstraction. On coinage, and, indeed, beginning in Miletos with Thales, the iconography of the man-faced bull represents a local embodiment of Acheloios, and in later iterations the figure appears to have the locative epithet or, in some cases, even ΙΣ written on the coin.[12] This means that by examining man-faced bull iconography and recognizing the epithet, an abstraction occurs: on the one hand, we recognize Acheloios, the prototypical god of all water, and yet on the other hand, since he is always inseparable from water, we recognize his embodiment in the local water source—thus, in Miletos, we find Acheloios Meandros. The employment of epithets in the ancient *λόγος* of Acheloios therefore expresses a One-Many juxtaposition conducive to the abstraction necessary to formulate the idea that *ὕδωρ* is the *ἀρχή*, since it too concerns the fundamental nature of water. Why attribute the impetus of philosophy (including metaphysical cosmology) to some unconscious event in the mind when we have a very obvious and clear prototype that was available to Thales, one that surely involved a sophisticated level of abstraction from the particulars to the general, and involved water, his *ἀρχή*? The argument is especially convincing given Plato's illustration in the *Phaedrus*, in which the abstraction from Acheloios is related directly to Thales' philosophy.

The μῦθος of Acheloios

The *μῦθος* of Acheloios is another essential element impacting Thales and thus giving rise to philosophy (and so also metaphysical cosmology). Here *μῦθος* means the story itself that influenced Thales, aside from the more delineated account concerning the nature of Acheloios vis-à-vis the rivers of the world and its role in the cognitive process of abstraction. The mythological account concerns the particular insight into the myth that Thales seems to have had. As we saw in Plato and the corresponding ancient art, there is a duality inherent in the myth of Acheloios, corresponding to both the corporeal realm and the intellectual realm. On the one hand, the physical dimension to the myth involves the recognition that regulating rivers produces great agricultural abundance. This, again, was Strabo's interpretation of the myth of Herakles and Acheloios—here the sacrifice of Acheloios brings forth the cornucopia, in the physical sense of an abundance of crops.

The other side to the story, however, is equally important. Here the idea is that struggling with the water-bull deity grants access to arcane knowledge—indeed, knowledge of something more ultimate. For Sophokles' Herakles, this knowledge (a form of self-knowledge accessed through the fulfillment of the Dodonaean prophecy) seemed to concern the recognition of his past misdeeds and purification of body that lead to apotheosis; presumably now he can join his father in the assent toward Being à la Plato. For Thales, it was an initial, more purely cognitive movement toward the *οὐσια ὄντως οὖσα*. Thales' brilliance shines forth in his original

[11] Homer, *Iliad* 21.365.
[12] Specifically on Campanian coinage. While most control marks at that mint are part of a series, ΙΣ appears unrelated and only occurs on the reverse of the coins always accompanying Acheloios.

application of the concept of sacrifice inherent in the myths to Acheloios himself. He applied the act of sacrifice to Acheloios by removing Acheloios' name from the framework, thus the sacrifice of Acheloios reveals *ὕδωρ* as qualified threefold *ἀρχή*, Acheloios' *μῦθος* having tacitly expressed the same idea. Thus, in Plato, Acheloios was positioned as the very foundation for an understanding of Being, and the corresponding art featured his head as the centerpiece of the table at the banquet of the gods. Similarly, in the Derveni cosmogony and as reflected in the Amathus prayers, in which the devotee assumes the form of Acheloios, Acheloios is the only god in the world, not created wholly in the mind of Zeus but granting access to him; hence also the Dodonaean insistence on a sacrifice to Acheloios accompanying all oracular pronouncements. In all cases Acheloios occupies a liminal space between man and the beyond insofar as he is the earthly being allowing the access point for an encounter with the colorless, formless, and truly intangible Being, i.e., it is through his sacrifice that we initiate our journey to Being. The intellectual dimension to the cult of Acheloios is therefore a counterpart to the physical, forming a complementary duality, and both concepts involve the sacrifice of Acheloios and its effects.

In a manner similar to the way in which the intellectual dimension of the Acheloios myth does not negate the truth of the physical dimension, wherein one hermeneutical framework is complementary to the other, so the demythologized new account of Thales (that is, an account not expressed via story), does not negate the truth of Acheloios.[13] In fact, Thales' insight actually reaffirms both Acheloios and the deeply held religious beliefs of various seventh-to-sixth-century Mediterranean cultures when properly understood: By positing an originating, primordial, divine water as the *ἀρχή*, Thales said virtually the same thing that was expressed—to a greater or lesser degree—in all these various myths that employed proper names. As I pointed out in the introduction to this book and as indicated by Ephorus, the two formulations, 'water is *ἀρχή*' and 'Acheloios is *ἀρχή*,' in which case we can substitute 'Acheloios' with 'Apsu,' or 'Nūn' or perhaps even 'Okeanos,' are not contradictory, but tautological, since *ὕδωρ* meant 'divine water' for Thales. Indeed, just as the Dodonaean Selli did not see a problem in the original assignment of names and epithets in place of the ubiquitous *θεοί* —because such a tactic did not cancel out the truth of the *θεοί*—so Thales' idea that *ὕδωρ* was the *ἀρχή* did not cancel out the *μῦθος* of Acheloios. And this recognition of a multiplicity of complementary hermeneutical frameworks, in which *ὕδωρ* is the *ἀρχή* and 'all things are full of gods,'[14] is at the heart of the essence of philosophy—a beholding of beauty and the various frameworks that such beholding reveals. To reduce philosophy to metaphysical cosmology and conflate that particular framework with philosophy itself—which the Neo-Marxians do—misses the essence of philosophy and confuses it with a particular account, assuming the ultimate character and structure of the entire enterprise is contained in one single iteration.[15] (If anything, coinage might have contributed to the very calculative thinking that allows for such a reduction). Thus, the *μῦθος* of Acheloios explains the very details of Thales' particular insight, namely, the application of the notion of sacrifice to Acheloios himself, rather than resorting to some

[13] For an interesting discussion that avoids reducing Thales to a form of atomism and argues that his philosophy was essentially consistent with myth, see Richard Rojcewicz, Everything is Water, *Research in Phenomenology* 44, 2 (2014): 194-211.

[14] One might add 'all things are constructed with right triangles,' if we follow Hahn's lead, insofar as that conceptualization would be yet another complementary framework for explaining the world. See Hahn, *The Metaphysics of the Pythagorean Theorem*, *passim.*

[15] Like metaphysics à la Heidegger, in which it sees beings as beings and forgets about Being (or confuses the 'totality of beings' for Being as such).

unconscious motivators whose exact cognitive and conscious details elude us, which is the greatest shortcoming of the Neo-Marxian analysis. Now we can point to the details of a particular myth and explain how Thales moved from a more mythopoeic mindset to a more philosophical mindset, still explaining the origin of metaphysical cosmology but not confining the essence of philosophy in the process.

The ἔργον of Acheloios

The deed of Acheloios, his submission to sacrifice, is the final element in our account of the Acheloios tradition's contributions to the original philosophical experience, and here I mean Acheloios' 'Act' (*ἔργον*) as actually exhibited in art and on coinage. Although we are still unsure of the exact date of the Acheloios stater, there are good reasons to think it was minted in the mid sixth century during Thales' life, and I have no doubt it came from Miletos. I'd now like to take this a step further and discuss the possibility that Thales was actually involved in the design of the coin.

Scholars do not quite know who struck the first coins and opinions vary greatly. Some numismatists believe that many of the pre-Croesus electrum types were struck by various groups or individuals as opposed to just city-states and kingdoms, and this meant any of the following: bankers, merchants, dynastai, tyrants, sanctuaries, traders or trade guilds, or persons placed in charge of specific issues.[16] Others believe that coinage must have been a well-regulated governmental venture from the start, since the earliest coins were fiduciary, and only the ruling authority (monarch or city-state) could coerce people into accepting money at a value less than its intrinsic worth. Indeed, Koray Konuk, following others, argues that coinage was created specifically because of the great variability in natural electrum.[17] Not everyone agrees with this assessment, however. Schaps, for instance, follows Head's original hypothesis, that the original electrum coins might have been issued by private merchants and banks who used such pieces during larger transactions that required balancing of the scale,[18] and this was later adopted and monopolized by the state. The debate rages on, but the idea that some (or even most) of the early electrum issues were struck by various groups is convincingly summarized by Fischer-Bossert:

> ...the increasing number of electrum coins from Asia Minor emerging on the international coin markets makes clear that the development of coin-minting was not only quick (explosive like the invention of book-print) but complex in the extreme; to give a figure, a number of c. 400 independent electrum series for the time-span between the invention of coinage and the Ionian revolt can now be estimated. While only a certain part of this vast number refers to coinages that lasted longer than a decade or so it is obvious that the issuers might be various political entities: not only city-states

[16] C. Kraay, *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins* (New York: Sanford J. Durst, 1976), 22-3; W. Fischer-Bossert, The Earliest Coinage, abstract from the conference *Shedding Light on the Matter: Ideascapes and Material Worlds in the Land of Thales*, University of Cambridge, 22nd and 23rd of March, 2018. Available online at http://ionia.eu/workshop/extended-abstracts/the-earliest-coinage-wolfgang-fischer-bossert/

[17] Koray Konuk, Asia Minor to the Ionian Revolt, in *Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

[18] Schaps, *The Invention of Coinage and the Monetization of Ancient Greece*, 100. See also Barclay V. Head, Chapter 5 of David George Hogarth, *Excavations at Ephesus* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1908), 88. This was the original publication of the Artemision hoard.

> such as Ephesus, Miletus, and Phocaea but also dynasts (secundogenitures of the Lydian kingdom but also Greek tyrants in the backwaters of the Ionian coast), sanctuaries that had a function as banks, perhaps (guilds of) traders, and so on. The number of city-states in Asia Minor that were issuing coins during Hellenistic times is smaller than the number of early electrum series![19]

Given the evidence, there is ample room for a prominent member of a city as rich as Miletos, the ornament of Ionia, to have a significant level of involvement in the design of a coin. In fact, there is a famous series from nearby Ephesus featuring a stag which, on the largest issue, even says, *Φαενος ἐμὶ σῆμα* ('I am the badge of Phanes,' Figure 2),[20] and this has been compared for generations to earlier seals that featured similar inscriptions, indicative of the role single, influential individuals might play in the design and production of coinage.[21]

But why Thales specifically? There are three reasons. First, we have plenty of evidence that Thales was engaged in political affairs, indicating that he was a member of the *βουλή* (*boulḗ*), or council of oligarchs that ruled Archaic Miletos.[22] For instance, Diogenes tells us that this was his original preoccupation,[23] and he seems to have returned to it later in life as well, for he also records that 'when Croesus approached the Milesians for an alliance, he [Thales] prevented it, which saved the city when Cyrus defeated him.'[24] Plutarch even records that Thales' political views specifically involved finance: When asked about the best democracy, he records that Thales said 'it is one that has citizens neither too rich nor too poor.'[25] Even if this is an apothegm later applied to Thales (the last lines of the *Phaedrus* suggest otherwise), there is really no dispute that Thales was a prominent citizen, and practical knowledge—despite the story of the well—is soundly attested for Thales.[26] Thus, Thales could certainly be involved in decisions concerning coin designs, especially since he weighed in on larger, regional political decisions.

The second reason is that Thales was upper class (as one among the *βουλή*) and hence, even though made fun of for his 'poverty,'[27] certainly had enough means to make larger purchases when necessary. *Πενίαν* is generally translated as 'poverty,' but I think it is used here in the sense that Thales lacked the comforts of life one would normally have as an elite of Miletos—he seems to have been somewhat reclusive, did not get married, and was also apparently aloof, so one can easily imagine he was not up-to-date with 7th-century Milesian fashion and did not really care, hence the ridicule of his contemporaries. Rather than being consumed with making money and living a lavish lifestyle, Thales was concerned with more ultimate things.[28]

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[19] Fischer-Bossert, The Earliest Coinage, paragraph 5.
[20] Seltman, *Greek Coins,* 28.
[21] Ibid. See also Wolfgang Fischer-Bossert, Phanes: A Die Study, 423-476.
[22] For the government of Archaic Miletos, see Gorman, *Miletos: The Ornament of Ionia,* 90.
[23] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.23.
[24] Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.25. Tran. McKirahan, *op.cit.*
[25] Plutarch, *Septe, sapientium convivium* 11.154e (Th 122). See also Iohannes Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 4.7.47 (Th 367).
[26] Plato, *Republic* 600a4-7 (ed. Burnet=Th 22); Aristotle, *Politics* 1.11.1259a5-19 (Th 28); Cicero, *De divination* 1.111-112 (ed. Ax=Th 77); Plutarch, *Solon* 2.8.1-4.79e (ed. Ziegler=Th 109), 12.11.1-12.1.84F (Th 114); Aelius Aristides, *ΠΡΟΣ ΚΑΠΙΤΩΝΑ* 327.15 (ed. Dindorf=Th 175); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 12.49.6=Th 22 & Th 270); *Scholia recentiora anonyma in nubes* 180d (ed. Koster=Th 588).
[27] See Aristotle, *Politics* 1.11.1259a5-19 (Th 28).
[28] Perhaps we have another allusion to Thales in this regard at *Phaedrus* 252a, in which the lover abandons all else for the beloved, which, if extended to Beauty itself, would seem apt: '...neglects property and cares not for its loss, and despising all the customs and properties in which it formerly took pride...'

However, his travels abroad and investment in olive futures[29] are important indications that we not read *πενίαν* to mean that Thales was completely destitute and without any means, like a homeless beggar, hence it is juxtaposed in the text with *πλουτεῖν* (from *πλούσιος*).[30] There is also plenty of evidence of his (presumably noble) lineage,[31] indicating he was among the upper class. Ultimately, then, Thales was a prominent and reasonably wealthy citizen of a city where coinage was minted (perhaps by various groups), and we have good reason to believe he had the means to make fairly large investments, in addition to traveling abroad, which was undoubtedly expensive.

The third reason, however, is the most important, and the one relevant to the thesis that the deed of Acheloios is a fundamental element in the emergence of philosophy, for it is this deed that leads the mind to more abstract principles and is also reflective of a more ultimate philosophical truth. The Acheloios stater, found far from Miletos in the very area Thales traveled, features a winged Acheloios kneeling in assent to being sacrificed, and this particular iconic pose, emerging in the Near East, [32] is found throughout the Greek world in later generations.[33] The winged man-faced bull is literally the iconic equivalent of divine water, *ὕδωρ*, whereas wings symbolize divinity and the man-faced bull, water. Thus, the beauty observed at the origin of philosophy appears on the obverse of this extraordinary coin: Acheloios Meandros as a winged man-faced bull kneeling in assent to being sacrificed,[34] thus exhibiting his essence as *ὕδωρ,* divine water, Thales' *ἀρχή*. It was this posture of assent that enabled Thales to apply the notion of sacrifice to Acheloios himself, removing the name and creating, in effect, a demythologized account of the *ἀρχή*. Thus, the posture encompasses the loving deed of Acheloios, and beholding the *glory* of that deed is the initial spark that led to the emergence of the philosophical experience, insofar as it produced an abstraction to more ultimate reality accessible only to *νοῦς* and in doing so revealed a multiplicity of hermeneutical frameworks. The coin is therefore an allegory for the origin of philosophy—it is the very badge of Thales, and perfectly captures the beauty prompting the mind's ascent toward Being. Thus, in the final analysis, it was not the coin that forged Thales' mind, but rather Thales' mind that fashioned the coin.

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[29] E.g., Aristotle, *Politics* 1259a5-19 (Th 28); Flavius Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 2.5.25 (ed. Kayser=Th 225). It is uncertain if the story is true or an apothegm, but Thales was clearly of the citizen class in society and this indicates he had financial resources. Panchenko believes the story is true, since it has such specific details, like the location in Chios. See Panchenko, *Thales and the Origin of Theoretical Reasoning,* 75.

[30] Ibid.

[31] The simple fact that his lineage was recorded and discussed is indicative of his status as a citizen, and hence differentiated from the *hoi poloi.* For his ancestry, see: Herodotus, *Historiae* 1.170 (Th 12); Plutarch, *De Herodoti malignitate* 15.857F/14.10-12 (ed. Häsler=Th 127); Pseudo-Hyginus, *De astronomia* 2.2.3 (ed. Le Boeuffle=Th 136); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.22 (Th 14 & Th 237); Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.14.62.1-63.2 (ed. Stählin/Treu=Th 202), 1.15.66.2 (Th 204); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 1.22 (Th 237); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.4.17-8 (Th 262); Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 1.12 (ed. Canivet=Th 327); *Suda,* Lexicon Theta 17.1 (ed. Adler=Th 495); *Scholia in Aratum* 39 (ed. Martin= Th 574); *Scholia in Platonem, Res Publica* 600A1-10 (ed. Greene=Th 578).

[32] In the original Near Eastern examples in which the figures kneel in assent to sacrifice, it is not yet identified with Acheloios. For discussion, see Molinari and Sisci, *ΠΟΤΑΜΙΚΟΝ: Sinews of Acheloios,* 13-14, and especially Figure 13, depicting a Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal featuring Gugalanna, the 'Bull of Heaven,' as he kneels in assent to sacrifice at the hands of Gilgamesh. This posture builds off the recumbent man-faced bull style pervasive in the Near East for thousands of years.

[33] All throughout Sicily before and during the time of Plato's visit, but also at Cyprus. See Chapter 6, above, for numismatic evidence.

[34] Recognition of the true significance of this pose was first observed by Rabun Taylor, who pointed out to me, concerning Neapolitan bronzes that feature the forepart of Acheloios Sebethos, that the figure was not 'swimming' as is usually believed, but rather kneeling in assent to sacrifice.

From Dialectical Materialism Back to Being

'But truly I shall speak without disguise, for my defeat, if rightly understood, should be my glory'

-Acheloios[35]

The way for escaping the Neo-Marxian tragedy of dialectical materialism and its hermeneutic of doubt is therefore revealed through Acheloios, the original Greek foundation leading to an understanding of Being in its difference from beings and the totality of beings. The importance of Acheloios lies precisely in the fact that his deed reflects the very meaning of Being, which, ultimately, is a sacrifice enabling the revelation of beings as beings. In various ways Heidegger taught something like this already, for he said that a fundamental characteristic of our human existence is metaphysics (technology),[36] the ontological condition whereby we appropriate beings as beings via the light of Being. Perhaps the best way to envision this phenomenon comes in Heidegger's 'Introduction to "What is Metaphysics?" in which he quoted a letter from Descartes to Picot, wherein all of philosophy was envisioned as a tree: the roots metaphysics, the trunk physics, and the branches the various sciences. In perhaps his best piece of writing Heidegger commented as follows:

> Staying with this image, we ask: In what soil do the roots of the tree of philosophy take hold? Out of what ground do the roots, and thereby the whole tree, receive their nourishing *juices and strength*? What element, concealed in the ground and soil, enters and lives in the roots that support and nourish the tree? What is the basis and element of the essence [later, 'clearing'] of metaphysics? What is metaphysics, viewed from its ground? What is metaphysics itself, at bottom?
>
> Metaphysics thinks beings as beings. Wherever the question is asked what beings are, beings as such are in sight. Metaphysical representation owes this sight to the light of Being. The light itself, i.e., that which such thinking experiences as light, no longer comes within the range of metaphysical thinking; for metaphysics always represents beings only as beings. Within this perspective, metaphysical thinking does, of course, inquire about the being that is the source and originator of this light. But the light itself is considered sufficiently illuminated through its granting the transparency for every perspective upon beings.[37]

In appropriating beings as beings we are therefore always oriented away from Being in its difference from beings, which is, to extend beyond Heidegger, not simply a clearing, but ultimately a self-sacrifice, for Being as such is necessarily sacrificed in any and all hermeneutical frameworks, 'which persist on the basis of a denial of the question-worthiness of Being.' [38] But the true philosopher, like Thales, delights in the very beholding of the multiplicity of

[35] Acheloios speaking to Theseus, from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 9.1, translation Brookes More (Boston: Cornhill Publishing Co., 1922).
[36] For what amounts to the conflation of metaphysics and "technology as an ontological condition," see Hubert Dreyfus, Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology, in *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology,* Second Edition, edited by David Kaplan (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 25-33.
[37] Heidegger, Introduction to 'What is Metaphysics?', 277.
[38] M. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning),* translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000) 4. Original title: *Beitrage zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis).*

hermeneutical frameworks that Being reveals, and the recognition of the multiplicity is a recognition of Being in its difference from beings—however nascent this understanding was of Thales.

At the end of *Being and Time* Heidegger asked: 'Is there a way leading from primordial *time* to the meaning of *Being*?'[39] In other words, what is that historical, liminal connection between the roots of metaphysics and the soil of Being that would lead to an understanding of the meaning of Being in its difference from beings? Although misdirected because of his still-abstract conceptualization of time (as primordial time, hence he did not look to Miletos), he nonetheless asked about the identity of that *element* in the soil that feeds and nourishes the tree with its *juices and strength*. There is of course one figure in the history of philosophy that bridges the gap, through whose sacrifice the mind embarked on a journey toward incorporeal Being: Acheloios, for it was by virtue of the beauty of the act that a higher truth was revealed to Thales—and this is ultimately reflective of an even greater truth about Being now accessible to us. Hence, we can now say, that the meaning of Being, as such, is ultimately Love, insofar as it is the ultimate, inexhaustible self-sacrificial opening *for the sake of* beings. And so, just as the *λόγος, μῦθος,* and *ἔργον* of Acheloios opened up the avenue to a clearer vision of Being in its relation to beings for Thales and his followers, so again it is Acheloios who frees us from the radical reductionism of the Marxians. The Marxists indeed saw the problematic nature of the complete metaphysical appropriation of the world in the Cartesian sense, but their solution was the complete and utter annihilation of Being—in effect, an uprooting of the tree now left to wither and die. But unbeknownst to them, Love *always* wins because its sacrifice is its glory, and the act of Acheloios frees us from the Marxian state precisely because we can now recognize, through our historical analysis of the sacrifice of Acheloios in relation to Thales, that the act is an imitation of the ultimate philosophical truth: that all things are contingent upon the all-encompassing bosom of sacrificial Being—the true *ἀρχή*.

We therefore conclude by questioning the ultimate thrust of this work at the individual level, in a similar way to how Socrates questioned whether he was a monster more furious than Typhon or a gentler and simpler creature. One possibility is that this work is a complete fabrication—a delusional, bourgeois fantasy emerging from a monomaniacal fetish with a weird, obscure iconography, in which I have projected a story onto meaningless bits of data that bear no real relation to one another, and certainly reflect no meaningful, underlying truth about reality and its ultimate ontological parameters—and, indeed, even I am a mere phantasm resulting from the introjection of exchange-value, motivated only by a desire for power. The other possibility is far more appealing, or at least it seems so to me—perhaps I too have suffered from the fourth type of madness, but rather than a delusion, something truly special has indeed revealed itself in the course of this book, and just as a particularly salient glimmer of Being exhibited itself to Thales through Acheloios, so again through Acheloios we can find our way back to Being. For the new philosophy also begins with the sacrifice of Acheloios, and we are now prepared to enter the next stage of development: aquatically-exhibited historical dualism, a theophenomenontology. And because self-knowledge is paramount to this new philosophical unfolding, a new first principle is also in order, one that washes out the brine of the *dubito, ergo sum*[40] and nourishes the tree of philosophy with the waters of sweet discourse: *fidimus ergo sumus!*

[39] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 415.

[40] This sentiment of Descartes was published posthumously. See Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, eds., La Recherche de la Vérité par La Lumiere Naturale, in *René Descartes, Œuvres* X (Paris: Vrin, 1901), 535. It is the same seed of doubt operative in the Marxian framework, which rejects the first principle of *quod sit per se necessarium* found in St. Thomas.

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Acheloios, Thales, and the Origin of Philosophy: A Response to the Neo-Marxians fundamentally changes our understanding of a pivotal moment in the history of mankind – the origin of the philosophical experience in 6th century Ionia. Through a careful analysis of the archaeological record, a close reading of hundreds of ancient sources, and a deep investigation into the various languages of our past, Nicholas Molinari demonstrates the importance of the influence of the cult of Acheloios on Thales; provides a critique of the Neo-Marxian prioritization of coined money and conflation of metaphysical cosmology and philosophy; and, most importantly, reintegrates beauty and love as philosophy's ultimate source.

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